

MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew, although it is only twenty-eight chapters long, is a very important book. In fact, Genesis and Matthew are the two key books of the Bible.

As we come today to the Gospel of Matthew, I'd like to bridge the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament because, in order to appreciate and to have a right understanding of the New Testament, it is almost essential to know something about this period of approximately four hundred years. This is the time span between the days of Nehemiah and Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. You see, after Malachi had spoken, heaven went silent. Station G O D went off the air, and there was no broadcasting for four hundred years. Then one day the angel of the Lord broke in upon the time of prayer when there was a priest by the name of Zacharias standing at the altar in Jerusalem. The angel gave the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. We shall see later how important John the Baptist is in the Gospel of Matthew.

We find that a great deal took place in this interval of four hundred years even though it is a silent period as far as Scripture is concerned. This period was a thrilling and exciting time in the history of these people, and in many ways it was also a tragic time. The internal condition of Judah experienced a radical transformation. A new culture, different institutions, and unfamiliar organizations arose in this period, and many of these new things appear in the New Testament.

World history had made tremendous strides in the interval between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament closed with the Medo-Persian Empire being the dominant power. Also, Egypt was still a power to be reckoned with in world politics. During the interval between the testaments, both faded from the scene as outstanding nations. World power shifted from the East to the West, from the Orient to the Occident, from Asia to Europe, and from Medo-Persia to Greece. When the New Testament opens, a new power, Rome, is the world ruler. A consideration of some important dates will give a bird's-eye view of this great transition period. (Because historians differ in their dating, consider these dates as approximate.)

480 B.C. Xerxes, the Persian, was victorious against the Greeks at Thermopylae but was defeated at the battle of Salamis. Actually, it was a storm that defeated him. This was the last bid of the East for world dominion.

333 B.C. Out of the West there came that "goat" which Daniel records in the eighth chapter of Daniel. This was Alexander the Great, the goat with the great horn. He led the united Greek forces to victory over the Persians at Issus.

332 B.C. Alexander the Great visited Jerusalem. He was shown the prophecy of Daniel which spoke of him; therefore he spared Jerusalem. Jerusalem was one of the few cities that he ever spared.

323 B.C. Alexander died way over in Persia. Apparently he had intended to move the seat of his empire there. Then the world empire of both East and West was divided among his four generals.

320 B.C. Judea was annexed to Egypt by Ptolemy Soter.

312 B.C. Seleucus founded the kingdom of the Seleucidae, which is Syria. He attempted to take Judea, and so Judea became the battleground between Syria and Egypt. This little country became a buffer state.

203 B.C. Antiochus the Great took Jerusalem, and Judea passed under the influence of Syria.

170 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes took Jerusalem and defiled the temple. He had been mentioned in Daniel as the "little horn" ([Dan. 8:9](#)). He has been called the "Nero of Jewish history."

166 B.C. Mattathias, the priest of Judea, raised a revolt against Syria. This is the beginning of the Maccabean period. Probably the nation of Israel has never suffered more than during this era, and they were never more heroic than during this interval. Judas Maccabaeus, whose name means "the hammer," was the leader who organized the revolt.

63 B.C. Pompey, the Roman, took Jerusalem, and the people of Israel passed under the rulership of a new world power. They were under Roman government at the time of the birth of Jesus and throughout the period of the New Testament.

40 B.C. The Roman senate appointed Herod to be king of Judea. There never has been a family or a man more wicked than this. One can talk about the terrible Mafia, but this family would exceed them all.

37 B.C. Herod took Jerusalem and slew Antigonus, the last of the Maccabean king-priests.

31 B.C. Caesar Augustus became emperor of Rome.

19 B.C. The construction of the Herodian temple was begun. The building had been going on quite awhile when our Lord was born and was still continuing during the time of the New Testament.

4 B.C. Our Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Radical changes took place in the internal life of the nation of Judea because of their experiences during the intertestamental period. After the Babylonian captivity, they turned from idolatry to a frantic striving for legal holiness. The Law became an idol to them. The classic Hebrew gave way to the Aramaic in their everyday speech, although the Hebrew was retained for their synagogues. The synagogue seems to have come into existence after the captivity. It became the center of their life in Judea and everywhere else they went in the world. Also, there arose among these people a group of parties which are mentioned in the New Testament and are never even heard of in the Old Testament:

1. PHARISEES -- The Pharisees were the dominant party. They arose to defend the Jewish way of life against all foreign influences. They were strict legalists who believed in the Old Testament. They were nationalists in politics and wanted to restore the

kingdom to the line of David. So they were a religio-political party. Today we would call them fundamental theologically and to the far right politically.

2. SADDUCEES -- The Sadducees were made up of the wealthy and socially-minded who wanted to get rid of tradition. By the way, does that remind you of the present hour? Isn't it interesting that the rich families of this country are liberal? The crumbs still fall from the rich man's table. They are willing to give the crumbs, but they don't give their wealth, that is sure. The Sadducees were liberal in their theology, and they rejected the supernatural. Thus they were opposed to the Pharisees. The Sadducees were closely akin to the Greek Epicureans whose philosophy was "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." We may have a mistaken idea of the Sadducees. Actually, they were attempting to attain the "good life." They thought that they could overcome their bodily appetites by satisfying them, that by giving them unbridled reign, they would no longer need attention. In our day, a great many folk have this same philosophy. It did not work in the past; neither will it work today.

3. SCRIBES -- The scribes were a group of professional expounders of the Law, stemming back from the days of Ezra. They became the hair-splitters. They were more concerned with the letter of the Law than with the spirit of the Law. When old Herod called in the scribes and asked where Jesus was to be born, they knew it was to be in Bethlehem. You would think that they would have hitchhiked a ride on the back of the camels to go down to Bethlehem to see Him, but they weren't interested. They were absorbed in the letter of the Law.

My friend, there is a danger of just wanting the information and the knowledge from the Bible but failing to translate it into shoe leather, not letting it become part of our lives. Through study we can learn the basic facts of Scripture, and all the theological truth contained in it, without allowing the Word of God to take possession of our hearts. The scribes fell into such a category. In our own day, I must confess that some of the most hard-hearted people I meet are fundamentalists. They are willing to rip a person apart in order to maintain some little point. It is important to know the Word of God -- that is a laudable attainment -- but also we are to translate it into life and pass it on to others.

4. HERODIANS -- The Herodians were a party in the days of Jesus, and they were strictly political opportunists. They sought to maintain the Herods on the throne, because they wanted their party in power.

The intertestamental period was a time of great literary activity in spite of the fact there was no revelation from God. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt, during the period from 285 to 247 B.C. It was translated by six members from each of the twelve tribes; hence, the name given to this translation was Septuagint, meaning "seventy." This translation was used by Paul, and our Lord apparently quoted from it.

The Apocrypha of the Old Testament was written in this era. These are fourteen books which bear no marks of inspiration. There are two books classified as the Pseudepigrapha, Psalter of Solomon and the Book of Enoch. They bear the names of two characters of the Old Testament, but there is no evidence that these two men were the writers.

Although this was a period marked by the silence of God, it is evident that God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ. The Jewish people, the Greek civilization, the Roman Empire, and the seething multitudes of the Orient were all being prepared for the coming of a Savior, insomuch that they produced the scene which Paul labeled, in [Galatians 4:4](#), "the fulness of time." The four Gospels are directed to the four major groups in the world of that day.

The Gospel of Matthew was written to the nation Israel. It was first written in Hebrew, and it was directed primarily to the religious man of that time.

The Gospel of Mark was directed to the Roman. The Roman was a man of action who believed that government, law, and order could control the world. A great many people feel that is the way it should be done today. It is true that there must be law and order, but the Romans soon learned that they couldn't rule the world with that alone. The world needed to hear about One who believed in law and order but who also offered the forgiveness of sins and the grace and the mercy of God. This is the Lord whom the Gospel of Mark presents to the Romans.

The Gospel of Luke was written to the Greek, to the thinking man.

The Gospel of John was written directly for believers but indirectly for the Orient where there were the mysterious millions, all crying out in that day for a deliverance.

There is still a crying out today from a world that needs a Deliverer. The religious man needs Christ and not religion. The man of power needs a Savior who has the power to save him. The thinking man needs One who can meet all his mental and spiritual needs. And certainly the wretched man needs to know about a Savior who not only can save him but build him up so that he can live for God.

The Gospel of Matthew was written by a publican whom the Lord Jesus had put His hand upon in a very definite way (see [Matt. 9:9](#)). He was a follower, a disciple, of the Lord Jesus. Papias says, Eusebius confirms, and other of the apostolic fathers agree, that this Gospel was written originally by Matthew in Hebrew for the nation Israel, a religious people.

I don't have time to give the background of all this, but God has prepared this whole nation for the coming of Christ into the world. And He did come of this nation, as the Lord Jesus Himself said, ". . . salvation is of the Jews" ([John 4:22](#)). It was a great German historian who said that God prepared the Savior to come out of Israel -- "salvation is of the Jews" -- and He prepared the heathen for salvation, because they were lost and needed it.

This remarkable book is a key book of the Bible because it swings back into the Old Testament and gathers up more Old Testament prophecies than any other book. One might expect it to do this since it was first written to the Jews. But then, it moves farther into the New Testament than any of the other Gospels. For instance, no other Gospel writer mentions the church by name; but Matthew does. He is the one who relates the Word of our Lord, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church . . ." ([Matt. 16:18](#)). Even Renan, the French skeptic, said of this Gospel that it "is the most important book in

Christendom, the most important that has ever been written." That is a remarkable statement coming from him! Matthew, a converted publican, was the choice of the Spirit of God to write this Gospel primarily to the people of Israel.

The Gospel of Matthew presents the program of God. The "Kingdom of Heaven" is an expression which is peculiar to this Gospel. It occurs thirty-two times. The word kingdom occurs fifty times. A proper understanding of the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" is essential to any interpretation of this Gospel and of the Bible. May I make this statement right now, and I do make it categorically and dogmatically: The Kingdom and the church are not the same. They are not synonymous terms. Although the church is in the Kingdom, there is all the difference in the world.

For instance, Los Angeles is in California, but Los Angeles is not California. If you disagree, ask the people from San Francisco. California is not the United States, but it is in the United States. The Chamber of Commerce may think it is the United States, but it's not. It's only one-fiftieth of it.

Likewise, the church is in the Kingdom, but the Kingdom of Heaven, simply stated, is the reign of the heavens over the earth. The church is in this Kingdom. Now I know that theologians have really clouded the atmosphere, and they certainly have made this a very complicated thing. Poor preachers like I am must come up with a simple explanation, and this is it: the Kingdom of Heaven is the reign of the heavens over the earth. The Jews to whom this Gospel was directed understood the term to be the sum total of all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming of a King from heaven to set up a kingdom on this earth with heaven's standard. This term was not new to them (see [Dan. 2:44](#); [Dan 7:14, 27](#)).

The Kingdom of Heaven is the theme of this Gospel. The One who is going to establish that Kingdom on the earth is the Lord Jesus. The Kingdom is all important. The Gospel of Matthew contains three major discourses concerning the Kingdom.

1. The Sermon on the Mount. That is the law of the Kingdom. I think it is only a partial list of what will be enforced in that day.
2. The Mystery Parables. These parables in [Matthew 13](#) are about the Kingdom. Our Lord tells us that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a sower, like a mustard seed, and so on.
3. The Olivet Discourse. This looks forward to the establishment of the Kingdom here upon this earth.

It will be seen that the term "Kingdom of Heaven" is a progressive term in the Gospel of Matthew. This is very important for us to see. There is a movement in the Gospel of Matthew, and if we miss it, we've missed the Gospel. It is like missing a turn-off on the freeway. You miss it, brother, and you're in trouble. So if we miss the movement in this marvelous Gospel, we miss something very important.

This Gospel is very much like the Book of Genesis. They are two key books of the Bible, and you really should be familiar enough with these two books so that you can think your way through them. I will be giving you chapter headings so you can learn to think your way through the book. I would tell my students in former days, "When you can't sleep at

night, don't count sheep. Instead, think your way through Genesis. Then think your way through the Gospel of Matthew. Take it up chapter by chapter. Chapter One: what is it about? Chapter Two: what is it about? If you say to me that you don't like counting sheep or chapters, then talk to the Shepherd, but the finest way to talk to the Shepherd is to go through these two books. That will help you to get acquainted with Him and come to know Him." By the way, it's more important to have Him talk to us than for us to talk to Him. I don't know that I've got too much to tell Him, but He has a lot to tell me. I suggest that you learn the chapters of Matthew so that you don't miss the movement in them.

Now I want to give you one way of dividing the Gospel of Matthew. I'll follow a little different division, but this will help you to think it through. It is important to know Matthew in order to understand the Bible!

1. Person of the King
Chapters [Mat. 1](#) through [Mat. 2](#)
2. Preparation of the King
Chapters [Mat. 2](#) through [Mat. 4:16](#)
3. Propaganda of the King
Chapters [Mat. 4:17](#) through [Mat. 9:35](#)
4. Program of the King
Chapters [Mat. 9:36](#) through [Mat. 16:20](#)
5. Passion of the King
Chapters [Mat. 16:21](#) through [Mat. 27:66](#)
6. Power of the King
Chapter [Mat. 28](#)

Outline

[Mat. 1](#)

Genealogy and Record of Virgin Birth of Jesus

[Mat. 2](#)

Visit of Wise Men
Flight to Egypt
Return to Nazareth

[Mat. 3](#)

John the Baptist
Forerunner of King
Announces Kingdom
and Baptizes Jesus, the King

[Mat. 4](#)

Testing of the King in Wilderness
Begins Public Ministry at Capernaum
Calls Disciples

[Mat. 5](#) through [Mat. 7](#)

Sermon on the Mount

- (1) Relationship of Subjects of Kingdom to Self, [Mat. 5:1-16](#)
- (2) Relationship of Subjects of Kingdom to Law, [Mat. 5:17-48](#)
- (3) Relationship of Subjects of Kingdom to God, [Mat. 6:1-34](#)
- (4) Relationship of Children of King to Each Other, [Mat. 7:1-29](#)

Mat. 8

Six Miracles of King Demonstrate His Dynamic to Enforce Ethics of Sermon on Mount

Mat. 9

Performs Six More Miracles
Calls Matthew
Contends with Pharisees

Mat. 10

Jesus Commissions Twelve to Preach Gospel of the Kingdom to Nation Israel

Mat. 11

Quizzed by Disciples of John
Rejects Unrepentant Cities
Issues New Invitation to Individuals

Mat. 12

Conflict and Final Break of Jesus with Religious Rulers

Mat. 13

Mystery Parables of Kingdom of Heaven

Mat. 14

John the Baptist Beheaded
Jesus Feeds 5,000
Sends Disciples Into Storm at Sea
Walks on Water to Them

Mat. 15

Jesus Denounces Scribes and Pharisees
Heals Daughter of Syrophoenician Woman and Multitudes
Feeds 4,000

Mat. 16

Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees
Confession from Disciples, Peter Spokesman
Jesus First Confronts Them with Church, His Death and Resurrection

[Mat. 17](#)

Transfiguration
Demon-Possessed Boy
Tax Money Provided by Miracle

[Mat. 18](#)

Little Child
Lost Sheep
Conduct in Coming Church
Parable on Forgiveness

[Mat. 19](#)

God's Standard for Marriage and Divorce
Little Children Blessed
Rich Young Ruler
Apostles' Position in Coming Kingdom

[Mat. 20](#)

Parable of Laborers in Vineyard
Jesus Makes 4th and 5th Announcement of His Approaching Death
Mother Requests Places of Honor for James and John
Jesus Restores Sight to Two Men

[Mat. 21](#)

King Offers Himself Publicly and Finally to Nation
Cleanses Temple
Curses Fig Tree
Condemns Religious Rulers with Parables of Two Sons and Householder

[Mat. 22](#)

Parable of Marriage Feast for King's Son
Jesus Answers and Silences Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees

[Mat. 23](#)

Jesus Warns Against and Pronounces Woes Upon Scribes and Pharisees
Weeps over Jerusalem

[Mat. 24](#) through [Mat. 25](#) Olivet Discourse

Jesus Answers Questions About Sign of End of Age and Sign of His Coming
Parable of Ten Virgins
Parable of Eight Talents
Judgment of Sheep and Goat Nations

[Mat. 26](#)

Jesus Plotted Against
Anointed by Mary of Bethany
Sold by Judas
Observes Last Passover and First Lord's Supper
Agonizes in Gethsemane
Arrested and Tried by Religious Rulers
Disowned by Peter

Mat. 27

Trial
Death
and Burial of the King

Mat. 28

Resurrection of the King
His Great Commission

Chapter 1

THEME: The genealogy of Jesus Christ and record of the virgin birth of Jesus

The Genealogy (1:1-16)

The genealogy which opens the Gospel of Matthew and the New Testament is in many respects the most important document in the Scriptures. The entire Bible rests upon its accuracy. You will notice it has three divisions:

1. Genealogy from Abraham to David ([vv. 1-6](#)).
2. Genealogy from Solomon to the Babylonian captivity ([vv. 7-11](#)).
3. Genealogy from the Babylonian captivity to Joseph, the carpenter ([vv. 12-17](#)).

In our study of Genesis, we note the fact that it is a book about families. The genealogies there are very important, and we see them here as we start the New Testament.

Now I must confess that at first this looks rather boring. You give someone a New Testament, and they begin here in the Gospel of Matthew with a genealogy staring them in the face, and they're not going to get very far in it. A chaplain friend of mine told me that in World War II he gave out literally thousands of New Testaments to servicemen. He's seen the men in the bunks open the New Testament, read for a minute or two at the beginning of Matthew, start through that genealogy and come to the conclusion this Book wasn't for them. Can't blame them! My point is that we ought to use a little wisdom in giving out literature to people. The average person should start first in any one of the other three Gospels, preferably Mark, rather than the Gospel of Matthew. But that doesn't lessen the importance of this genealogy.

The New Testament rests upon the accuracy of this genealogy because it establishes the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is of the line of Abraham and of the line of David. Both are

very important. The line of Abraham places Him in the nation, and the line of David puts Him on the throne -- He is in that royal line.

The genealogies were very important to the nation Israel, and through them it could be established whether a person had a legitimate claim to a particular line. For example, when Israel returned from the captivity, we find in the Book of Ezra, "These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood" ([Ezra 2:62](#)). It was possible in Ezra's day to check the register of the tribe of Levi and remove those who made a false claim.

Evidently these genealogies were kept by the government and were accessible to the public. I have a notion they were kept in the temple because Israel was a theocracy, and actually the "church" and the state were one. This genealogy was obviously on display and could have been copied from the public records until the temple was destroyed in B.C. 70. The enemies of Jesus could have checked them and probably did. This is interesting and important because they challenged every move of the Lord Jesus, even offering a substitute explanation for the Resurrection, but they never did question His genealogy. The reason must be that they checked it out and found that it was accurate.

This is most important because it puts Jesus in a very unique position. You remember that He said the Shepherd of the sheep enters in by the door but the thief and the robber climb up some other way to get into the sheepfold (see [John 10:1-2](#)). That "fold" is the nation Israel. He didn't climb into the fold over a fence in the back, and He didn't come in through the alley way. He came in through the gate. He was born in the line of David and in the line of Abraham. This is what Matthew is putting before us. He is the fulfillment of everything that had been mentioned in the Old Testament. So the enemies of Christ never could challenge Him in regard to His genealogy. They had to find some other ways to challenge Him, and, of course, they did.

When I was a teenager, I became interested in the Bible for the first time, and I went to a summer conference where the Lord spoke to my heart. Our Bible teacher thrilled my heart as he taught the Word of God. One morning he asked, "How many of you young people have read the Bible through in a year?" There were two to three hundred young people there, but not a hand went up. He asked the same question four times. Finally, one young man in the back put up his hand rather hesitatingly and said, "Well, I read it, but I only read the parts that were interesting. I didn't read the genealogies." Everybody laughed, and the teacher laughed, too, and admitted that he didn't read them either. At that very moment it occurred to me that since the Spirit of God has used so much printer's ink to give them to us, there must be some importance in them for us. So I'll have you note this genealogy now in Matthew because it is very important.

This is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus on Joseph's side. We'll have another when we get over to Luke, and that will be from Mary's side.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham [[Matt. 1:1](#)].

"The book of the generation" is a phrase which is peculiar to Matthew. It's a unique expression, and you won't find it anywhere else in the New Testament. If you start going

back through the Old Testament, back through Malachi and Zechariah and Haggai and back to the Pentateuch, through Deuteronomy, Numbers, Leviticus, Exodus into Genesis, you'll almost come to the conclusion that it's nowhere else in the Bible except here in Matthew. Then all of a sudden, you come to the fifth chapter of Genesis and see "This is the book of the generations of Adam . . ." ([Gen. 5:1](#)). There is that expression again. There are two books: the book of the generations of Adam and the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. How did you get into the family of Adam? You got in by a birth. You didn't perform it; in fact, you had nothing to do with it. But that's the way you and I got into the family of Adam. We got there by birth. But in Adam all die ([Rom. 5:12](#)). Adam's book is a book of death.

Then there is the other book, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. How did you get into that family, into that genealogy? You got into it by a birth, the new birth. The Lord Jesus says we must be born again to see the Kingdom of God (see [John 3:3](#)). That puts us in the Lamb's Book of Life, and we get there by trusting Christ. We all are in the first book, the book of the generations of Adam. I trust that you, my friend, are also in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Matthew says Jesus is "the son of David, the son of Abraham." Didn't Matthew know that Abraham came before David? Of course he did because he makes that clear in the rest of the genealogy. Then why did he put it this way? He is presenting the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the One who is the King, the One who is to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. And that comes first. He must be in the line of David in fulfillment of the prophecies that God made to David. He is the Son of David.

He is also the Son of Abraham and it is very important that He be the Son of Abraham, because God had said to Abraham, ". . . in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . ." ([Gen. 22:18](#)). And in [Galatians 3:16](#) Paul explains who that "seed" is: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." So Jesus Christ is the Son of Abraham.

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat
Judas and his brethren;

And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat
Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and
Naasson begat Salmon;

And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth;
and Obed begat Jesse;

And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon
of her that had been the wife of Urias [[Matt. 1:2-6](#)].

A careful look at the genealogy that follows is not only interesting; it is actually thrilling. Four names stand out as if they were in neon lights. It is startling to find them included in the genealogy of Christ. First, they are the names of women; second, they are the names of Gentiles.

Customarily, the names of women did not appear in Hebrew genealogies, but don't find fault with that for the very simple reason that today we have the same thing in marriage. In a marriage the name that the couple takes is the name of the man. They don't take the name of the woman. Her line ends; his goes on. That's the way we do it today, and that's the way they did it then.

Down through the years I have performed marriages in which the girl had a lovely name like Jones or Smith, and she wanted to exchange it for a name like Neuenschwander or Schickelgruber! You would think that she'd not want to surrender her name for one having four or five syllables, but that's the way they do it today. I have a clipping in my file of about ten years ago that tells of a couple in Pasadena who did the unusual thing of taking the name of the woman, which, I understand, can be legally done. But our custom is to take the name of the man, and it is the man's genealogy that is given.

In Jesus' day it was indeed unusual to find in a genealogy a woman's name -- yet here we have four names. They are not only four women; they are four Gentiles. As you know, God in the Law said that His people were not to intermarry with tribes that were heathen and pagan. Even Abraham was instructed by God to send back to his people to get a bride for his son Isaac. Also, the same thing was done by Isaac for his son Jacob. It was God's arrangement that monotheism should be the prevailing belief of those who were in the line that was leading down to the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet in His genealogy are the names of four gentile women -- two of them were Canaanites, one was a Moabite, and the fourth was a Hittite! You would naturally ask the question, "How did they get into the genealogy of Christ?"

"Tamar" is the first one, and she is mentioned in verse three. Her story is in [Genesis 38](#), and there she is called Tamar. That chapter is one of the worst in the Bible. Tamar got into the genealogy because she was a sinner.

"Rachab" is the next one mentioned in verse five. She's not a very pretty character in her story back in Joshua chapter 2 where she is called Rahab. But she did become a wonderful person after she came to a knowledge of the living and true God. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" ([Heb. 11:31](#)). She got into the genealogy of Christ for the simple reason that she believed. She had faith. Notice the progression here. Come as a sinner, and then reach out the hand of faith.

"Ruth" is the next one mentioned in verse five. She is a lovely person, and you won't find anything wrong with her. But at Ruth's time there was the Law which shut her out because it said that a Moabite or an Ammonite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord (see [Deut. 23:3](#)). Although the Law kept her out, there was a man by the name of Boaz who came into his field one day and saw her. It was love at first sight.

Now, maybe you didn't know that I believe in love at first sight. I proposed to my wife on our second date, and the only reason I didn't propose on our first date was because I didn't want her to think I was in a hurry! I do believe in love at first sight. But don't misunderstand me -- we waited a year before we were married, just to make sure. And I think that is always the wise thing to do.

Boaz loved Ruth at first sight, and he extended grace to her by putting his mantle around her and bringing her, a Gentile, into the congregation of Israel. She asked, ". . . Why have I found grace in thine eyes . . . ?" ([Ruth 2:10](#)). You and I can ask that same question of God regarding His grace to us. Again, note the progression. We come as sinners and hold out the hand of faith, and He, by His marvelous grace, saves us.

"Bathsheba" is not mentioned by name but called "her that had been the wife of Urias" ([y. 6](#)). Her name isn't mentioned because it wasn't her sin. It was David's sin, and David was the one that really had to pay for it. And he did pay for it. She got into the genealogy of Christ because God does not throw overboard one of His children who sins. A sheep can get out of the fold and become a lost sheep, but we have a Shepherd who goes after sheep and always brings them back into the fold. He brought David back. So this is the whole story of salvation right here in this genealogy.

Now there are some more interesting things about this genealogy. If you will compare this genealogy with the one in [1Chronicles 3](#) (some of the names are spelled differently), you will find that in verse eight of Matthew, the names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are left out. This shows that genealogies are quoted to give us a view of a certain line of descendants and that every individual is not necessarily named in every genealogy of the Bible. I think we should remember this in the genealogies given to us in Genesis before the Flood. These are not necessarily complete genealogies, but they are given to trace a certain line for us. I personally think man has been on this earth a lot longer than Ussher's dating which is found in the margins of many editions of the Bible. Remember that these dates are by Ussher and are not part of the Bible. They are faulty and do not belong there.

And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and
Amon begat Josias;

And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they
were carried away to Babylon [[Matt. 1:10-11](#)].

In [verse 11](#), we find that Matthew skips Jehoiakim but includes Jechonias. Jechonias deserves our special attention because God had said that none of his seed would sit on the throne. "As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah [his name is Jeconiah, but God took the Je off his name because it is the prefix for Jehovah, and this man was a wicked king] the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence. . . . Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" ([Jer. 22:24, 30](#)). Because of the sin of this man Jechonias, no one in his line could ever sit on the throne of David. You see, Joseph is in this line, but Joseph is not the natural father of Jesus. This is one of the most remarkable facts in the Scriptures, and Matthew is trying to make it clear to us. Joseph gave to Jesus the title, the legal title, to the throne of David because Joseph was the husband of Mary who was the one who bore Jesus. Jesus Christ is not the seed of Joseph, nor is He the seed of Jeconiah. But both Joseph and Mary had to be from the line of David, and they were -- through two different lines from two different sons of David. We'll find when we get to Luke that Mary's line comes from David through his son Nathan. Joseph's line comes through the royal line through Solomon. So Joseph and Mary both had to go to Bethlehem to be enrolled for taxation because they were both from the line of David. You see how

interesting, fascinating, and important these genealogies are and how much they are worth our study.

Now the genealogy concludes with this verse --

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ [[Matt. 1:16](#)].

You see that this breaks the pattern which began as far back as [verse 2](#) where it says that Abraham begat Isaac. From then on it was just a whole lot of "begetting," and [verse 16](#) begins by saying, "And Jacob begat Joseph." You would expect it to continue by saying that Joseph begat Jesus, but it does not say that. Instead, it says, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Obviously, Matthew is making it clear that Joseph is not the father of Jesus. Although he is the husband of Mary, he is not the father of Jesus.

What is the explanation of this? Well, Matthew in the rest of this chapter will give us the explanation and will show how it fulfills Old Testament prophecy.

The Virgin Birth Of Jesus Christ (1:17-23)

Luke, who wrote the Gospel bearing his name, was a Greek doctor. In his Gospel, he goes into an extended section on obstetrics. Both Gospels declare that Jesus was virgin born. Joseph was not His father, but Mary was not unfaithful to Joseph. Jesus is not an illegitimate child. This is something new: ". . . A woman shall compass a man" ([Jer. 31:22](#)).

Now, my friend, I have never objected to any man saying that he does not believe in the virgin birth. A man has the right to disbelieve. But I do have two very definite objections: I do not think that a preacher should deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. If he does, then he ought to get a job selling insurance and deal with births in a different way. And I do object to anyone saying that the Bible does not teach the virgin birth of Christ. The only Jesus that we have any historical record of is the One who was virgin born. If you want to take the position that He was not virgin born, where is your documentation? You will have to produce evidence -- certainly more than the puny reasoning of man. It is so easy to sit in a swivel chair in some theological seminary and write a thesis on the impossibility of the virgin birth. You may write a very profound tome on the subject, but you haven't any documents to back up your denial. All you have is just rationalism. By the process of rationalizing you may say, "It couldn't have happened." Well, who are you to say that it couldn't have happened? A few years ago man said that it was impossible to go to the moon, but we have gone there, and we have gone there by using the laws of God. God is the Creator of natural laws. He can either use those natural laws or He can set them aside in order to accomplish His purposes. The record clearly states that Jesus Christ was virgin born.

In [verse 17](#) we find a statement which will explain something in the genealogies.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations [[Matt. 1:17](#)].

Matthew puts the genealogy into groupings to give an overall view of Old Testament history. One era extends from Abraham to David, another from David to the Babylonian captivity, and the third from the captivity in Babylon to the birth of Jesus Christ. Obviously, he has omitted some names from the genealogy in order to fit fourteen into each period. The question is, why did he do this? Apparently, the number fourteen (twice seven) offered some proof concerning the accuracy of this genealogy.

Now that Matthew has shown that Joseph is not the father of Jesus, he is going to give us an explanation. Already in the Old Testament, a supernatural birth has been predicted by God. Jeremiah is talking to the nation Israel when he says, "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man" ([Jer. 31:22](#)). That's not the way it's done, my friend. That's not natural birth; it's supernatural. The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus is the "new thing" which God has done. And it is the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost [[Matt. 1:18](#)].

"The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." Here's the way it happened, Matthew is telling us. When His mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, that is, she was engaged to him, before they came together -- they had had no sexual relationship -- she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily [[Matt. 1:19](#)].

The Mosaic Law was very specific at this point. It said that a woman who was guilty of being unfaithful should be stoned to death -- that was the extreme penalty. But this man Joseph was a remarkable man. We devote a great deal of attention to Mary, and rightly so. Protestants should not let themselves be deterred from giving Mary a great deal of credit. She was a remarkable person. Remember that she was the one whom God chose to be the mother of our Lord, and God makes no mistakes. He picked the right girl. While all of this is true, we need to remember that God also chose Joseph. God made no mistake in choosing him either. A hot-headed man would immediately have had her stoned to death or would have made her a public example by exposing her. But Joseph was not that kind of man. He was a gentle person. He was in love with her, and he did not want to hurt her in any way, although he felt that she had been unfaithful to him.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost [[Matt. 1:20](#)].

In order to prevent a very tragic situation, the angel appeared to Joseph to make clear to him what was taking place.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins [[Matt. 1:21](#)].

The name Jesus means "Savior." He shall have the name Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying [[Matt. 1:22](#)].

Matthew, who is writing for the nation Israel, points out that all this was done so that it might be fulfilled as the Lord had spoken. Matthew is appealing to the nation Israel to understand that this One who had come must be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy.

It has been said that there are over three hundred prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ that have been literally fulfilled. I don't know how many of them are in Matthew, but I do know that Matthew quoted more from the Old Testament than the other three Gospel writers all together. It seems he records things and substantiates them from the Old Testament because he is not primarily trying to give a "life of Christ" but is showing that this is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him.

Now he states the prophecy which was given in [Isaiah 7:14](#):

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us [[Matt. 1:23](#)].

Now let's look at this a moment because it is very important. The liberal theologian has, of course, denied the fact of the virgin birth of Christ, and he has denied that the Bible teaches His virgin birth. Very candidly, I suspect that the Revised Standard Version was published in order to try to maintain some of the theses of the liberals. In fact, I am sure of this because one of the doctrines they have denied is the virgin birth. In the New Testament of the Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1946, [Matthew 1:23](#) reads thus: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel' (which means, God with us)."

In the Old Testament of the Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1952, [Isaiah 7:14](#) reads like this: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Notice that in Isaiah they substituted "young woman" for the word virgin, even though in [Matthew 1:23](#) they had used the word virgin, which is a fulfillment of [Isaiah 7:14](#)!

The prophecy of [Isaiah 7:14](#) was given as a sign. My friend, it is no sign at all for a young woman to conceive and bear a son. If that's a sign, then right here in Southern California a sign is taking place many times a day, every day. They translated it "young woman" to tone down that word virgin.

Let us look at [Isaiah 7:14](#) in the original Hebrew language. The word used for "virgin" is almah. The translators of the RSV went to the writings of Gesenius, an outstanding scholar who has an exhaustive Hebrew lexicon. (I can testify that it's also exhausting to look at it!) Gesenius admitted that the common translation of the word is "virgin," but he said that it could be changed to "young woman." The reason he said that was because he

rejected the miraculous. So this new translation and others who have followed him, have attempted to say that almah means "young woman" and not "virgin."

Let's turn back to [Isaiah 7](#) and study the incident recorded there. This was during the time when Ahaz was on the throne. He was one of those who was far from God, and I list him as a bad king. God sent Isaiah to bring a message to him, and he wouldn't listen. So we read: "Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD" ([Isa. 7:10-12](#)). May I say, it was pious hypocrisy for him to say what he did. God had asked Isaiah to meet Ahaz on the way to deliver God's message to him that God would give victory to Ahaz. However, Ahaz wouldn't believe God and so, in order to encourage his faith, Isaiah tells him that God wants to give him a sign. In his super-pious way Ahaz says, "Oh, I wouldn't ask a sign of the Lord." Isaiah answered him, "God is going to give you a sign whether you like it or not. The sign isn't just for you but for the whole house of David." Now here is the sign: ". . . Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" ([Isa. 7:14](#)). Obviously, if this refers to a young woman, it would be no sign to Ahaz, or to the house of David, or to anybody else; but if a virgin conceives and bears a son, that, my friend, is a sign. And that's exactly what it means.

When the word almah is used in the Old Testament, it means a virgin. Rebekah was called an almah before she married Isaac. I asked a very fine Hebrew Christian, who is also a good Hebrew scholar, about that. He said, "Look at it this way. Suppose you went to visit a friend of yours who had three daughters and two of them were married and one was still single. He would say, 'These two are my married daughters, and this young lady is my third daughter.' Do you think he would mean a prostitute when he said 'young lady'? If you would imply that she was anything but a virgin, he would probably knock your block off." May I say, I would hate to be those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ when they must come into the presence of the Son of God. I'm afraid they are going to wish they could somehow take back the things they have said to malign Him.

The fact that the word almah means "a virgin" is proven by the Septuagint. During the intertestamental period, seventy-two Hebrew scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes, worked down in Alexandria, Egypt, on the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. When they came to this "sign" in Isaiah, those seventy-two men understood that it meant "virgin," and they translated it into the Greek word parthenos. That is the same word which Matthew uses in his Gospel. My friend, parthenos does not mean "young woman"; it means "virgin." For example, Athena was the virgin goddess of Athens, and her temple was called the Parthenon because parthenos means "virgin." It is clear that the Word of God is saying precisely what it means.

His Name (1:17-23)

Notice something wonderful. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." It looks as if there is a problem here. Can you tell me where Jesus was ever called Emmanuel? No, He is called Jesus because that is His name. He was given this name because He shall save His people from their sins. Christ, by the way, is His title; Jesus is

His name. But it says here that He shall be called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Friend, here we have one of the most wonderful things in the entire Word of God. Let's look at this. Emmanuel means "God with us." He can't be Emmanuel, God with us, unless he is virgin born. That's the only way! And notice, unless He is Emmanuel, He cannot be Jesus, the Savior. The reason they call Him Jesus, Savior, is because He is God with us. This truth about the One who came down to this earth is one of the most wonderful things in the Bible.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" ([Heb. 2:9](#)). He had to be a sacrifice that was acceptable. I couldn't die for the sins of the world. I can't even die a redemptive death for my own sins. But He can! How can Jesus be a Savior? Because He is Emmanuel, God with us. How did He get with us? He was virgin born. I say again, He was called Jesus. He was never called Emmanuel. But you cannot call Him Jesus unless He is Emmanuel, God with us. He must be Emmanuel to be the Savior of the world. That is how important the virgin birth is.

Can a person be a Christian and deny the virgin birth? Hear me very carefully: I believe that it is possible to accept Christ as your Savior without knowing much about Him. You may not even know that this record is in the Bible. But after you have become a child of God, you will not deny the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. You may not have to know it to be saved, but as a child of God you cannot deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Do I sound dogmatic, friend? Well, I hope I do because I consider this to be all-important. I want a Savior who is able to reach down and save Vernon McGee. If He's just another man like I am, then He's not going to be able to help me very much. But if He is Emmanuel, God with us, virgin born, then He is my Savior. Is He your Savior today? He took upon Himself our humanity in this way so that He might taste death for us, that He might die a redemptive death on the cross for us.

Chapter 2

THEME: The visit of the wise men after the birth of the Lord Jesus; the flight into Egypt; the return to Nazareth

The Fulfillment Of Prophecy (2:1)

All of this is a historical record of what took place, but back of it there is a tremendous truth being presented, and we don't want to miss that. We have said before that each Gospel was directed to meet the needs of a particular group of people and that Matthew was written to the nation of Israel. It is for religious people. Recorded here is the fulfillment of four prophecies. To show how these Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled at the birth of Jesus is the purpose, I believe, of this chapter. I am sure there were many sincere students of the Scriptures living in Christ's day who wondered how all of these prophecies could be fulfilled. It seemed difficult, if not impossible. Let me list several here, then we will see how they were fulfilled at the time of Christ's birth: (1) He was to be born in Bethlehem (see [Mic. 5:2](#)); (2) He was to be called out of Egypt (see

[Hos. 11:1](#)); (3) There was to be weeping in Ramah (see [Jer. 31:15](#)); and (4) He was a root from the stem of Jesse and therefore to be called a Nazarene (see [Isa. 11:1](#)).

Since Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, why should there be weeping in Ramah, which is about as far north of Jerusalem as Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem? And He was to be called a Nazarene although He would be born in Bethlehem and called out of Egypt. The question is: How could all of these prophecies be fulfilled in a little baby? Well, Matthew shows how literally, accurately, and easily all were fulfilled without any strain on prophecy or on history. It just came about as God said it would come about.

In our day when there are certain prophecies that relate to the second coming of Christ, we may find it difficult to correlate them and to see the way in which they can all be fulfilled. I'm of the opinion we are coming to the time of their fulfillment, and we are going to find out that it all will take place in a normal, natural way. It looks like a jigsaw puzzle to us down here, but, when we get into His presence and it is all fulfilled, it will have been just as natural as the prophecies about His first coming. Every little piece in the jigsaw puzzle will fit into place, and we're going to wonder why in the world we didn't see it at the time.

The Visit Of The Wise Men (2:1-12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem [[Matt. 2:1](#)].

This is the historical record of the coming of the wise men. Notice that they came in the days of Herod the king. One thing that Herod did not want was competition. In fact, the one thing that Herod would not tolerate was competition. So the wise men coming to Jerusalem really alerted him.

"Behold there came three wise men from the east to Jerusalem." Is that what your Bible says? You say, "No, you've inserted the number three." Well, isn't that what you've been taught by your Christmas cards? I think a great many people know more about the Christmas story from Christmas cards than from the Bible, and therefore they have many inaccurate impressions. I'll attempt to correct several of them in this chapter.

First, you will notice that the record doesn't tell us there were three wise men. I don't know how many there were, but I doubt whether three wise men would have disturbed Herod or have excited Jerusalem. I do believe that three hundred men would have done so. These wise men who came from the East evidently came from different areas. They had been studying the stars, and when this new star appeared, they joined forces and came to Jerusalem. I don't know how many there were, but I'm almost sure it wasn't three, and I believe three hundred would be more nearly true. But, please, don't say that I said there were three hundred!

But the wise men came --

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him [[Matt. 2:2](#)].

They were looking for a king, and that was the thing which disturbed Herod, the king.

"We have seen his star in the east." In poetry that is called the eastern star, and, actually, there is an organization by that name. The worthy matron of that group was a member of my church in Nashville, and she was greatly upset when she heard me say that it was not an eastern star. If they had seen His star in the east and it had been an eastern star, the wise men would have ended up in India or China. The star was in the west! The wise men were in the east. The star was in the west, and they followed it. They came west, not east. My question is this: How in the world did they associate a star with a king, and how did they identify it with Israel? All I know is that in that section of the East, the people had a prophecy given by Balaam, which is recorded in [Numbers 24:17](#). (Remember that old Balaam gave this prophecy concerning the nation Israel.) "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."

Notice that the prophecy says a Star shall come out of Jacob -- that is, the nation Israel. And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. The star and the sceptre go together. That is the only place I know where they are put together in prophecy in the Old Testament. The wise men in the East had that prophecy, and so they came out of the mysterious East seeking a king.

This did disturb the city of Jerusalem and old King Herod.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him [[Matt. 2:3](#)].

When there converged on the city of Jerusalem a very impressive delegation of wise men, asking a question like this, the whole city was disturbed.

Herod wanted to know about this. This man was Herod the Great, a very superstitious man. I hope that you have a good Bible dictionary and that you will take time to read about the Herod family. They were a bunch of rascals, much like the house of de'Medici. This family was a real first century Mafia. Herod the Great was the biggest rascal of them all. He was an Idumean who had bought his position from the Roman government; he was not of Israel at all. And he was really anxious to locate this One who appeared to be a rival for his throne.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born [[Matt. 2:4](#)].

He didn't ask; he demanded. He said, "I know that you have the Scriptures and in them you have a record of a Messiah that is coming. I want to know where He is to be born." One of the amazing things is that they were able to tell him.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel [[Matt. 2:5-6](#)].

When Herod asked the scribes this question, they didn't have to search the Scriptures for it; they knew where it was -- [Micah 5:2](#). As a matter of fact, they didn't need even to turn to it, because they had it in their minds. They could quote it. They knew all about the coming of the Messiah. The problem was that their knowledge was academic rather than vital. It was not personally meaningful to them. They are examples of folk who know the history contained in the Bible and they know certain factual truths, but these things carry no personal meaning for them. Since the scribes knew the Old Testament Scriptures so well, you would have thought that they would have gone to the wise men and said, "How about letting us ride down with you? We are looking for the Messiah too!"

I wonder today how many people are really looking for the coming of the Lord. We talk about it, and we study a great deal about prophecy. Would you really like to see Him right now? Suppose He broke in right today where you are and into what you are doing. Would He interrupt anything? Would you like to say to Him, "I wish that You would postpone your visit to some other time"?

Herod got his information from the scribes --

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared [[Matt. 2:7](#)].

I am going to make a statement now and will try to prove it later: The star had appeared in the night sky sometime before the wise men appeared in Jerusalem. Remember that they made the trip by camel -- not by jet plane. It is a long, hard trip by camel! I am of the opinion that they didn't arrive in Jerusalem until at least a year after the appearance of the star. This wasn't just a little Christmas celebration for them. As they traveled the long, weary miles, they had been hanging on to the hope of seeing Him and presenting their gifts to Him. Notice that Herod "inquired diligently" the time of the star's appearance in the sky. Keep that in mind. It will be an important fact later in the story.

So Herod sends the wise men on to Bethlehem --

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also [[Matt. 2:8](#)].

He's being as subtle as an old serpent, and that's exactly what Herod was. Suppose he had said, "If there's a king born around here, I'm going to get rid of him," and then had sent soldiers down to Bethlehem. I can assure you that he would never have found the Child because He would have been hidden. He knew that the clever way and the best way was to let the wise men go down and find the child and then come back and tell him. He said he wanted to go down and worship Him, but of course what he really wanted to do was to kill Him.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy [[Matt. 2:9-10](#)].

Now the star appears again. I think they must have traveled a long time without seeing the star. That ought to answer the nonsense one hears today about there being a confluence of certain stars that happened at one particular time. Matthew makes it clear that this star was a very unusual star; in fact, it was a supernatural star. It was miraculous, and we needn't try to find an explanation for it. Now, it may be, as many astronomers think, that there was quite a movement in the heavens at that time. When He came, heaven and earth both responded to His coming into this world. I think such things did take place, but the wise men saw a supernatural star.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh [[Matt. 2:11](#)].

When they arrived, Jesus was not in the stable behind an inn. The great movement of people in the city of Bethlehem had now all ceased. They had gone back to their homes because the enrollment was over. But this little Baby was newly born, and they couldn't move Him for a while. Probably such a trip for the Little One would have jeopardized His life. So they had stayed in Bethlehem and had moved into a house. The wise men found them in a house. Again, the Christmas cards show the wise men coming into the stable. Well, unless Joseph pointed out that stable to them, they never even knew where it was. They came to the house.

Please note that when they saw the young child with Mary His mother, they fell down and worshiped Him. If ever there was a time when Mary should have been worshiped, this was it. But they didn't worship her -- they were wise men! They worshiped Him and presented to Him their treasures: gold and frankincense and myrrh.

It is very interesting to study the facts concerning His second coming as they are related to us in [Isaiah 60:6](#): "The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD." What gift is left out at His second coming? Myrrh! They do not bring myrrh because that speaks of His death. When He comes the second time, nothing will speak of His death. Gold speaks of His birth. He is born a King. Frankincense speaks of the fragrance of His life. Myrrh speaks of His death. All of this is indicated in the gifts that were brought to Him at His first coming. But at His next coming, myrrh will not be brought to Him. The next time He comes, He won't come to die upon a cross for the sins of the world. He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way [[Matt. 2:12](#)].

The wise men had assumed that Herod was sincere and wanted to come down and worship Him. However, he would have killed the Child had not an angel of the Lord warned the wise men to go back to their own country by a different route. They may have continued south down to Hebron, then crossed over south of the Dead Sea, and thus they would be out of the range of Herod altogether.

The Flight Into Egypt (2:13-18)

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him [[Matt. 2:13](#)].

The angel of the Lord appeared also to Joseph and told him that it was time to get the Child out of Bethlehem because Herod would attempt to murder Him.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt [[Matt. 2:14](#)].

Notice Joseph's instant obedience.

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son [[Matt. 2:15](#)].

This is a quotation from [Hosea 11:1](#). This is a marvelous prophecy because it has a historical basis. Out of Egypt the son was called, which was the nation; and out of Egypt the Son was called, who was a Person, this Child. So Joseph took the young Child and the mother to Egypt and stayed there until God called Him out.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men [[Matt. 2:16](#)].

Part of what I'm going to say now is supposition, and part is based on solid fact. As I mentioned before, the wise men did not arrive at the time the shepherds arrived at the stable. The wise men came later, and, according to [verse 11](#), the family had moved into a house by then. When Herod had had his private session with the wise men, he "inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared." I suppose that the wise men said, "Well, it was about a year ago." If we are accurate in thinking that these wise men came from all quarters of the East and had met in a certain place from which they began their trek to Jerusalem, that would consume a great deal of time in a day when travel was by camel instead of by jet. It may have been a year, it may have been longer, but Herod was so infuriated that the wise men did not come back and report concerning the Child, that he probably said, "Well, if they said it was a year ago when they saw the star, I'll just double it and make it two years and kill all the children two years old and younger!" Herod was actually a madman.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not [[Matt. 2:17-18](#)].

This is an unusual prophecy also. Jeremiah didn't say that the weeping would be heard in Bethlehem. I'm sure there was great mourning in Bethlehem too. But Jeremiah mentions Rama (spelled Ramah in the Old Testament), and Rama was about as far north of Jerusalem as Bethlehem was south of Jerusalem. And Rama was Jeremiah's country, by the way. I imagine that when the soldiers had been given their orders to slay the children, the captain said to Herod, "Where do you want me to begin?" And I think that old Herod said, "Well, just draw a circle around Jerusalem with the radius as far south as Bethlehem and as far north as Rama" -- yet Rama was not in any way involved in it. So, you see, Herod slew a great many children. You can imagine the weeping all the way from Bethlehem to Rama, a radius of about ten to twelve miles, or twenty to twenty-five miles across the area. It must have been a heartbreaking time in the lives of these people when they lost their little ones. The prophecy given through Jeremiah was literally fulfilled.

The Return To Nazareth (2:19-23)

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt [[Matt. 2:19](#)].

I must call attention to this. We are told that the angel of the Lord appeared to Jacob at Peniel (see [Gen. 32](#)). Here it is an angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ. Now Christ incarnate is down in Egypt.

Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life [[Matt. 2:20](#)].

It's essential to get Jesus out of the land of Egypt and back up into Israel. The most important reason is that He has been born under the Law, and He is to live under the Mosaic Law. He is the only One who really ever kept it. He must get out from under the influence of Egypt. He is not to be raised down there as Moses had been and as the children of Israel had been when they were becoming a nation down in Egypt.

And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee [[Matt. 2:21-22](#)].

By the way, Archelaus was another Herod and very brutal.

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene [[Matt. 2:23](#)].

"He shall be called a Nazarene." The Hebrew word for Nazareth was Netzer, meaning a branch or shoot. The city of Nazareth was so called because of its insignificance. The prophecies of [Isaiah 11:1](#); [Isaiah 53:2-3](#); and [Psalm 22:6](#) are involved in the term Nazarene. But the Lord Jesus was given that term not only because He was a root out of the stem of Jesse, but because He grew up in the city of Nazareth, and He was called a Nazarene, which fulfilled the prophecies.

Now we have seen all four of the prophecies dealing with locations in the birth of Christ: born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, weeping in Rama, and called a Nazarene were fulfilled in a very normal way. He touched base in all of these places, and what seemed rather strange prophecies became very sane realities.

Chapter 3

THEME: John the Baptist, the forerunner of the King, announces the Kingdom and baptizes Jesus, the King

Ministry Of John The Baptist (3:1-6)

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [[Matt. 3:1-2](#)].

Now, all of a sudden, John the Baptist walks onto the pages of Scripture. If we had Matthew's Gospel only, we would ask, "Where did he come from, and what is his background?" -- because Matthew gives us none of that, and the reason is obvious. The prophet Malachi had said that the messenger would come ahead to prepare the way for the coming of the King -- "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me . . ." ([Mal. 3:1](#)). This messenger was John the Baptist. You don't really need to know about the background of a messenger. When the Western Union boy delivers a message to your door, do you say to him, "Young man, did your ancestors come over on the Mayflower? What is your background?" You're not interested in that. You are interested in the message because the message is all-important, and that is what you want. So you thank him, give him a tip, and dismiss him. You are through with him.

John the Baptist made it very clear that he was just the messenger, and Matthew is making that clear, too. Therefore, he walks out onto the page of Scripture, preaching in the wilderness of Judea saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now let's deal with these expressions: (1) "Repent ye"; (2) "the kingdom of heaven"; and (3) "is at hand." They are very important.

"Repent" is an expression that always has been given to God's people as a challenge to turn around. "Repent" in the original Greek is *metanoia*, meaning "to change your mind." You are going in one direction; turn around and go in another direction.

Repentance is primarily, I think, for saved people, that is, for God's people in any age. They are the ones who, when they become cold and indifferent, are to turn. That was the message to the seven churches of Asia Minor in [Revelation 2](#) and 3, and it was the message of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Someone may ask whether the unsaved man is supposed to repent. The unsaved man is told that he is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That was the message of Paul to the jailer at Philippi (see [Acts 16:31](#)). That old rascal needed to do some repenting; but when an unsaved man believes in Jesus, he is repenting. Faith means to turn to Christ, and

when you turn to Christ, you must also turn from something. If you don't turn from something, then you aren't really turning to Christ. So repentance is really a part of believing, but the primary message that should be given to the lost today is that they should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We like to see folk come forward in a service to receive Christ or sign a card signifying that they have made that decision, but the important thing is to trust Christ as your Savior, and if you really turn to Him, you turn from something else.

The expression "kingdom of heaven" means the rule of the heavens over the earth. The Lord Jesus is the King. You can't have a kingdom without a king; neither can you have a king without a kingdom. Remember Richard III who said in the Shakespearean play, "My kingdom for a horse." If he had traded his kingdom for a horse, he wouldn't have been a king. He would have been only a man on horseback. A king must have a kingdom. So what did John the Baptist mean by "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"? He meant that the Kingdom of Heaven is present in the Person of the King.

Is there a present reality of the Kingdom of Heaven? Yes, there is. Those who come to Him as Savior and acknowledge Him are translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. They belong to Him now. And they have a much more intimate relationship than that of a subject with a king. Christ is the Bridegroom, and believers are part of His bride!

Then someone may ask whether we are like subjects in a kingdom because we are to carry out His commands. Again I say, there is more to it than that. We are to obey Him because we love Him. It is a love relationship. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)).

The "kingdom of heaven" is the rule of the heavens over the earth. That's not in existence today. Christ is not reigning over the world now. There must be something wrong with the thinking of those who insist that the Kingdom of Heaven is in existence in our day. Christ is not reigning in any form, shape, or fashion -- except in the hearts of those who have received Him. However, He is coming someday to establish His Kingdom on the earth. When He does, He will put down rebellion. Believe me, He is really going to put it down.

The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, or was present, in the Person of the King. That was the only way in which it was present.

Matthew now tells us that what he is recording is in fulfillment of prophecy --

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying,
The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of
the Lord, make his paths straight [[Matt. 3:3](#)].

"The prophet Esaias" is Isaiah, and the prophecy is in [Isaiah 40:3](#).

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness" -- all that John the Baptist claimed for himself was that he was a voice crying in the wilderness. And his purpose was to "prepare the way of the Lord."

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey [[Matt. 3:4](#)].

He's a strange individual, isn't he? He follows a strange diet and has an unusual way of dressing. I hate to say this, but today John would probably qualify in his looks as a vagrant. His raiment was of camel's hair, his leathern girdle was about his loins, his meat was locusts and wild honey. We're told that he never shaved and had long hair. Here's an unusual man, friend, a man with a mission. He's really an Old Testament character, walking out of the Old Testament onto the pages of the New Testament. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets.

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan [[Matt. 3:5](#)].

Notice that the crowds went out to him. John did not rent a stadium or an auditorium or a church, and there was no committee that invited him. In fact, he didn't come to town at all. If you wanted to hear John, you went out to where he was. Obviously, the Spirit of God was on this man.

And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins [[Matt. 3:6](#)].

In other words, all of this denoted a change in the lives of these people. The very fact that they submitted to John's baptism was an indication that they were leaving their old lives and turning to new lives.

The Pharisees And Sadducees (3:7-12)

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance [[Matt. 3:7-8](#)].

Now see who is coming! Listen to the way he greets these dignified visitors. Suppose your preacher got up next Sunday morning and said, "O generation of vipers"! I imagine that the deacons would be looking for another preacher! This is really strong language. He's talking to the dignified Pharisees and Sadducees and is telling them, "There must be evidence of this new life. You can't just go through the act of baptism. There must be fruit in your life."

And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham [[Matt. 3:9](#)].

Friend, he's making a strong statement here! You can understand why he was not elected the most popular man of the year in Judea.

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire [[Matt. 3:10](#)].

A great deal is said in the New Testament about fruit bearing. Fruit bearing is the result of having the right kind of tree. Only a fruit tree can produce fruit. He talks here about the axe being laid to the root of the tree, and the reason is that the tree is not bearing fruit. An apple tree will bear apples, and a plum tree will bear plums. But when a tree bears thorns, it is not an apple tree, and it must be cut down. The root and the fruit go together, by the way, and a tree must have the right kind of root to bear the right kind of fruit. That is exactly what John the Baptist is saying to them here. He is telling them that the wrong kind of tree is going to be taken down and cast into the fire.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire [[Matt. 3:11](#)].

John is saying, "I baptize with water. But He is coming, and when He comes, He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" -- that final "and" is already over nineteen hundred years long. You and I are living in the age of the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit in this present age. He will baptize with fire when He comes the second time, and fire means judgment. This distinction needs to be made.

Somebody will say, "I thought that on the Day of Pentecost, the believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, because it says that tongues of fire sat upon each of them." Oh, my friend, you ought to read [Acts 2:2-3](#) again. The record is this: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (italics mine). It wasn't wind and it wasn't fire; it was the coming of the Holy Spirit. But there was something to appeal to the eye-gate and to the ear-gate. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came, there was not the fulfillment of the baptism of fire. Let me repeat that, the baptism of fire will take place at the second coming of Christ. In the present age of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit comes upon every believer. Not just some, but every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit, which means that the believer is identified with the body of Christ; that is, he becomes part of the body of Christ. This is one of the great truths in the Word of God.

John continues to speak of Christ's second coming --

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire [[Matt. 3:12](#)].

Jesus Is Baptized Of John (3:13-17)

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him [[Matt. 3:13](#)].

This is remarkable, and we are going to ask the question: "Why was Jesus baptized?" and try to answer it.

But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him [[Matt. 3:14-15](#)].

Why was Jesus baptized? There may be several answers, but the primary reason is stated right here: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Jesus is identifying Himself completely with sinful mankind. Isaiah had prophesied that He would be numbered with the transgressors (see [Isa. 53:12](#)). Here is a King who identifies Himself with His subjects. Actually, baptism means identification, and I believe identification was the primary purpose for the baptism of the Lord Jesus. Again, the reason Jesus was baptized was not to set an example for us. It was not a pattern for us to follow. Christ was holy -- He did not need to repent. You and I do need to repent. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was baptized to completely identify Himself with humanity.

There was a second reason Jesus was baptized. Water baptism is symbolic of death. His death was a baptism. You remember that He said to James and John when they wanted to be seated on His right hand and on His left hand in the Kingdom, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ([Matt. 20:22](#)). You see, Christ's death was a baptism. He entered into death for you and for me.

There is a third reason for the baptism of Jesus. At this time He was set aside for His office of priest. The Holy Spirit came upon Him for this priestly ministry. Everything that Jesus did, His every act, was done by the power of the Holy Spirit. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" ([2Cor. 5:21](#)). There was sin on Him, but there was no sin in Him. My sin was put on Him, not in Him. That is an important distinction. Therefore, you and I are saved by being identified with Him. He identified Himself with us in baptism. And Peter says that we are saved by baptism (see [1Pet. 3:21](#)). In what way? By being identified with the Lord Jesus. To be saved is to be in Christ. How do we get into Christ? By the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I believe in water baptism because by it we declare that we are identified with Christ. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" ([John 6:37](#)). We must recognize that we have to be identified with Christ, and that is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Our water baptism is a testimony to this. One time an old salt said to a young sailor in trying to get him to accept Christ and be baptized, "Young man it is duty or mutiny!" And when you come to Christ, my friend, you are to be baptized because it is a duty. If you are not, it is mutiny.

This subject of baptism needs to be lifted out of the realm of argument to the high and lofty plane of standing for Christ. How we need to come out and stand for Christ!

Let me repeat [verse 15](#): "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him" -- that is, John baptized Him.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased [[Matt. 3:16-17](#)].

Here we have a manifestation of the Trinity. As the Lord Jesus is coming out of the water, the Spirit of God descends upon Him like a dove, and the Father speaks from heaven.

The Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Lord Jesus is now identified with His people. What a King! Oh, what a King He is!

Chapter 4

THEME: The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, the beginning of His public ministry at Capernaum; the calling of four of His disciples by the Sea of Galilee

The Threefold Temptation Of Jesus (4:1-11)

Let us follow the movement of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus came down to be born among us and so to be identified with us. He grew up as any other child would, except that He was harmless and without sin. Now, in His baptism, He has been identified with us. He has put on our sin. Now He is going to be tested because there are some real questions to be answered. Is the King able to withstand a test, and can He overcome?

The word tempt has a twofold meaning:

1. "Incite or entice to evil; seduce." There is something in each of us which causes us to yield to evil. This was not true of Jesus. ". . . the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" ([John 14:30](#)). He was ". . . holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners . . ." ([Heb. 7:26](#)). So the temptation for Jesus had to be different from that which would cause me to fall, in that it needed to be a much greater temptation.
2. "Test." God does not tempt men with evil according to [James 1:13](#). Yet, we are told ". . . God did tempt Abraham . . ." ([Gen. 22:1](#)). This means that God was testing the faith of Abraham.

Jesus is now to be tested. Could Jesus have fallen? I want to answer that with an emphatic no! He could not have fallen. If Jesus could have fallen, then you and I do not have a sure Savior at all.

Perhaps you are asking, "Well then, if Jesus could not have fallen, was His temptation a legitimate and genuine temptation?" May I say to you that His temptation was much greater than any that you and I have ever had. When a new model Chevrolet or Ford or Dodge is developed, it is thoroughly tested to prove it can stand the test. And every genuine diamond is tested to show that it is not a phony. In a similar way, the Lord Jesus Christ was tested to demonstrate that He was exactly who He claimed to be.

Let me illustrate with this little story. When I was a boy, I lived out in West Texas. It was a sparsely populated area in those days. The Santa Fe railroad came through our little town, but it went on by and stopped in the next little town. But it crossed the left fork of the Brazos River near our town. In the summertime there wasn't enough water in that river to rust a shingle nail, but in wintertime you could float a battleship on it. One winter

we really had a flood, and it washed out the Santa Fe bridge. We were without a train for a long time. Finally, they put in a bridge. They worked a long time on it. Then one day they brought in two engines, stopped them on the bridge, and tied down their whistles. Believe me, that was more whistling than we had ever heard in our little town! All twenty-three of us ran down to see what was happening. As we were standing around, one brave citizen went up to the engineer in charge with our question, "What are you doing?" The engineer answered, "Testing the bridge." Our man said, "Are you trying to break it down?" The engineer almost sneered, "Of course not! We're testing it to prove that it can't be broken down."

May I say to you, that was the exact reason the Lord Jesus was tested. It was to prove, to demonstrate, that He could not be broken down. His testing, therefore, was greater than ours. There is a limit to what we can bear. You give me enough temptation, you build up the pressure, and finally I'll succumb to it. That is true of you too. But Christ never gave in although the pressure continued to increase. In other words, a ten-pound fishing line will break when twenty pounds of pressure is put on it, but a hundred-pound line can bear more than twenty-five pounds of pressure. Now, I'm the ten-pound fishing line, and He is the one hundred-pound line.

Another really interesting feature of this temptation is the comparison and contrast with the testing of Eve in the Garden of Eden. To begin with, Christ was tested in a wilderness while Eve was tested in a garden. What a contrast!

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil [[Matt. 4:1](#)].

He was to be tested by the Devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread [[Matt. 4:2-3](#)].

This is the same kind of temptation that came to Eve. The first one was physical. She saw that the tree was good for food (see [Gen. 3:6](#)). The Lord Jesus was told to turn stones to bread. [1John 2:15-16](#) says that such temptation for the Christian is the ". . . lust of the flesh."

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God [[Matt. 4:4](#)].

That is found in [Deuteronomy 8:3](#). Jesus surely knew Deuteronomy, and He believed it was the inspired Word of God.

Now the second testing:

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:
for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:
and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou
dash thy foot against a stone [[Matt. 4:5-6](#)].

The Devil is quoting [Psalm 91:11-12](#), although he does not quote it accurately. Now, this is the spiritual temptation. For Eve it was that she saw the fruit was ". . . to be desired to make one wise . . ." ([Gen. 3:6](#)). For the Christian, it is the ". . . pride of life . . ." ([1John 2:16](#)).

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the
Lord thy God [[Matt. 4:7](#)].

He is quoting [Deuteronomy 6:16](#).

The third testing is psychological.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain,
and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of
them;

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall
down and worship me [[Matt. 4:8-9](#)].

Satan showed Him the kingdoms of the world and their glory. This, you see, is a psychological temptation. Man lusts for power. Eve was subjected to the same temptation: ". . . ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" ([Gen. 3:5](#)). Many of us succumb to this test.

Notice the answer of the Lord Jesus --

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written,
Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve
[[Matt. 4:10](#)].

He is quoting [Deuteronomy 6:13](#) and [Deuteronomy 10:20](#). Friend, we see that our Lord answered each time with Scripture. Certainly, that ought to have a message for all of us.

Why is it that many of us are having trouble living the Christian life? May I say this very kindly: It is ignorance of the Word of God. Notice that our Lord always answered by giving the Word of God. I believe that the Word of God has an answer for your particular problem. That doesn't mean that I know the answer for your problem. It doesn't mean that your psychologist or psychiatrist knows the answer for your problem. But God has an answer for your problem, and it is in His Word. That is the reason we should know the Book better than we do.

Let me repeat, the Lord Jesus answered Satan every time out of the Word. He did not say, "Well, I think this" or "I believe there is a better way of doing it." He said very definitely that the Word of God says thus and so. He used the Word of God for His answer. And for the child of God, that is enough.

By the way, the Devil seemed to think it gave good answers because in the next verse we read --

Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him [[Matt. 4:11](#)].

[Luke 4:13](#) tells us that the Devil left Him for a little season. I think he was back the next day -- and was testing Him throughout His life. Especially do we see the temptation of the Devil in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus endured indescribable suffering.

Now let's make a very brief recapitulation of this episode in the life of our Lord and notice some things that it clearly teaches.

First of all, we have seen that Jesus was born a King, He was introduced as a King, He was baptized as a King, and now we have seen that He was tested as a King. All the way through Matthew's Gospel He is a King.

This testing revealed several things. One of them is that the Devil is a person. In this contact with Jesus, he is treated as a person. This ought to answer any Bible believer who has questions about him, because there are those who insist that the Devil is only an influence.

Also, we notice the very subtle insinuation of the Devil. He first said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" ([v. 3](#)). In other words, prove it in a way which is not God's way. There was no attempt, of course, to tempt Jesus to commit a crime. For Him, that would not have been a real temptation because the inclination of Jesus was to do good. Since bread was the staff of life, to make stones into bread would be a very good thing. And later on in His ministry He fed the multitudes with bread. But the inherent evil of Satan's temptation was to get Jesus to go outside of the will of God for His life.

Also, we see that all the way through the temptations, the Lord Jesus answered the Devil from the Word of God. In other words, He used the sword of the Spirit (see [Eph. 6:17](#)) to meet the enemy of God and man. Every time His answer was, "It is written." Oh, my friend, if only we were more adept at using the sword of the Spirit! It is our weapon in this day, and it is a very effective weapon.

Another interesting point is that Jesus quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy.

The second thing the Devil wanted Jesus to do was to become a religious leader by a stupendous miracle rather than by offering His credentials in the manner that God had prescribed. The Devil's way would miss the Cross of Christ. Much of what is called Christianity today is "Devil-anity" or "Satan-anity" because it leaves the Cross of Christ out altogether. The Devil is asking Jesus to become a great religious leader by a miracle.

Friend, it's very dangerous today to be led astray by miracle workers. Right now many people are going after so-called faith healers. I don't know why so many folk go after that type of thing when a little investigation would reveal that there are no real miracles taking place in their services, although there is a great deal of emotion and folderol involved. In Southern California I have made an offer of one hundred dollars to anyone who will come forward and present their credentials and demonstrate that they were actually healed by a miracle worker, a healer. Frankly, I have been amazed that only two

or three have come. These were very sincere folk who really believed that they had been healed. They thought that I was way out in left field because I didn't believe they had been healed -- and I didn't. But don't misunderstand, I believe in miracle healing -- that is, I believe that you go directly to the Great Physician. When you have something seriously wrong with you, you don't go to an intern or a quack doctor. What you do is go to a specialist in that particular field. I've taken my case to the Great Physician, and I can recommend Him. I believe in going directly to Him and not through some of these so-called miracle-workers. No man can perform miracles. Not even the Lord Jesus would become a religious leader the way the Devil wanted Him to become one, and that is very interesting.

You'll notice that the Devil came back and quoted Scripture also. He said: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee. . . . They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" ([Ps. 91:11-12](#)). The Devil was pretty good at quoting Scripture, but he wasn't quite accurate. Shakespeare said that the Devil could quote Scripture for his purpose; but, actually, the Devil can misquote Scripture for his purpose. Satan left out a very important phrase from the passage which he quoted from [Psalm 91](#). He omitted ". . . to keep thee in all thy ways" ([Ps. 91:11](#)). That is the important part of the verse. Satan was attempting to get the Lord Jesus to ignore God's way. My friend, it is not always God's will to perform something in your life or in my life that is miraculous. There is an idea circulating in our contemporary society that we can force God to do something, that He is sort of a Western Union boy or that He is more or less working for you and is under your command to do what you desire Him to do. Oh, my friend, we can't do that! God is sovereign, and we happen to be the creature -- He is the Creator. We must yield to the will of God. That may not be pleasant at times, but the will of God -- not your will or my will -- is that which is all important.

Another thing about this temptation which really raises a question is that the Devil offered the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of this world! Does the Devil have the kingdoms of the world to offer? Think that one over before you attempt to answer it. Well, let me give you my answer, and I have thought about it a great deal. The Lord Jesus did not challenge his statement that he had the kingdoms of the world to offer. Jesus didn't say to him, "You can't offer Me the kingdoms of the world because you don't have them to give." I assume that the Devil did have them to give. This fact gives us a little different viewpoint of the trouble we are having in the world today. The Devil is running everything! Some Christians tend to fight the evils of communism without realizing that behind communism is Satan and that behind the confusion and turmoil in the world is Satan. Let's remember who our enemy really is. He is a spiritual enemy. He wants to become God. Remember that he said to Jesus, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me"!

In [verse 11](#) we saw that after the third temptation, the Devil left the Lord Jesus for awhile. Certainly, he did not leave Him alone permanently.

Jesus Begins His Public Ministry At Capernaum (4:12-17)

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim [[Matt. 4:12-13](#)].

Jesus withdrew from the Jerusalem area because John had been taken by Herod and put in prison. Now we have the Lord Jesus shifting His headquarters from the south to the north and from Nazareth, His hometown, over to Capernaum. Matthew does not give us the details of this move in his record. This is an example of the fact that the four Gospel records do not attempt to parallel each other. One is not a carbon copy of any of the others. The attempt to harmonize the Gospels is a big mistake. I have written a booklet entitled *Why Four Gospels?* in which I attempt to show that each one is written for a definite purpose. Not one of them was intended to be a biography of the Lord Jesus -- no one could write that. Each book presents its case to reach a certain segment of the human family. Matthew was written to reach the religious element and is primarily for the nation of Israel. Actually, it was written in Hebrew -- Papias and Eusebius, church fathers, both say that, as well as others of that period.

Although Matthew gives us no details of the move to Capernaum, we learn from other Gospels that Jesus had been rejected by His hometown. Capernaum became His headquarters and continued as such, as far as we can tell, until the hour that He went to Jerusalem for the final time to be crucified.

Matthew will give us the reason He moved His headquarters from Nazareth to Capernaum. The other Gospel writers do not tell us this, but Matthew records it to show that in everything the Lord Jesus did, He was moving in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies --

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up [[Matt. 4:14-16](#)].

We find this prophecy in [Isaiah 9:1-2](#) and [Isaiah 42:6-7](#). I won't take the space to go into the background of this area called Galilee of the Gentiles, but if you want to do some research, you will find it very profitable to see the condition of that area at the time the Lord Jesus was there. Remember that He also spent His boyhood there. It was called Gentile country because out of the Roman Empire many folk had migrated to that area. There was a marvelous resort section around the Sea of Galilee, but it was very worldly and even wicked. The people in that area were very far from God.

The great light of the Lord Jesus broke upon them, and His very presence created a responsibility for them. They witnessed many of His miracles, but there was little response. Later, in [Matthew 11:20-24](#), He pronounces judgment upon them when He says, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!"

In Capernaum Jesus picked up right where John the Baptist left off.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [[Matt. 4:17](#)].

Jesus message was, "Repent, turn around, come to Me, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was at hand in the person of the King, of course -- they couldn't have the Kingdom of Heaven without Him. As we have seen the Kingdom of Heaven, simply stated, is the reign of the heavens over the earth. This is what the Lord Jesus will bring to this earth someday. This earth will become "heaven" for Israel, an earthly people, and they will go into eternity right down here. The church has a heavenly hope, but the earthly hope is also a marvelous hope, and it is the hope of the Old Testament.

Jesus Begins To Call His Disciples (4:18-25)

Now Jesus begins to gather disciples about Him. Notice the following verses.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men [[Matt. 4:18-19](#)].

In the Gospels the Lord makes at least three calls to these men, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that three meetings took place between Christ and these men. The first meeting took place in Jerusalem, as recorded in [John 1:35-42](#). Their second meeting took place by the Sea of Galilee, and apparently this is the record of it. They had seen Him before this, but at that time He had not called them to be with Him. Now here at the Sea of Galilee when He meets them again, He calls them to follow Him. And then we will find that they went back to fishing -- Mark and Luke give us that detail. And finally He called them again, and that was to apostleship.

The wonder of it all is that Jesus called men like this. I have always felt that since He called imperfect men like the disciples were, He may be able to use me, and He may be able to use you. It is encouraging to know that we don't have to be super-duper saints to be used by Him. He may not make you a fisher of men, if you are not in the fishing business. But whatever business you are engaged in, He can use you. Whatever your talent may be, if you will turn it over to Him, He can use it. Years ago a lady in my church was absolutely tongue-tied when it came to witnessing for Christ, but she could bake the most marvelous cakes! She used to deplore the fact of her inability to witness, and I said to her one day, "Did it ever occur to you that the Lord may want you in the church family to bake cakes?" That may seem ridiculous, but it is not. The important thing for us is to give ourselves to Him. Under His direction He won't have us all doing the same thing because He gives us separate gifts. The body of Christ has many members in it, and they all have different functions to perform.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him [[Matt. 4:20-22](#)].

These are very interesting men, and we will get better acquainted with them as we move along, especially as we see them in the other Gospel records.

Now remember that Jesus is in the northern section of Israel at this time --

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people [[Matt. 4:23](#)].

Notice that Jesus is teaching in their synagogues, and He is preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. What is it? The gospel (good news) of the Kingdom is that it is at hand in the person of the King. They are to accept and receive Him. Also, He is healing their physical illnesses. Friend, there were thousands of people in that day whom Jesus healed. Matthew especially lets us know that. If we will pay attention to the text, we will find that there were not just a few isolated cases, but thousands of folk were healed. That is the reason the enemies of Jesus never questioned His miracles -- there were too many of them walking around. By the way, I live in Southern California where many so-called faith healers claim the healing of thousands of people, but we don't see these purported miracles walking around, at least they don't come my way.

And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them [[Matt. 4:24](#)].

Notice the multitudes.

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan [[Matt. 4:25](#)].

Decapolis was a district containing ten cities in the northeastern part of Galilee, east of the Jordan River. (I have had the privilege of visiting one of those cities.) Also, folk came up from Jerusalem and from Judea, the southernmost division of Palestine, and from beyond Jordan, which means a long way off. Jesus is ministering there in the north of Palestine.

It should be kept in mind as we consider the Gospel of Matthew that Matthew is making no attempt to give us a chronological record of the life of Christ. He is presenting Jesus in his Gospel as King, and he follows a pattern which is a movement in bringing the King and His claims to the nation Israel. This is important to observe. If we miss the movement in Matthew, we miss the purpose of this Gospel.

Chapter 5

THEME: The beginning of the so-called Sermon on the Mount dealing with the relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom to self and to law

Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount (5:1)

Although we will consider each chapter of the Sermon on the Mount separately, let's first consider it as a whole. The Lord Jesus gave four major discourses. Matthew records three of them: (1) the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5 -- 7; (2) the Mystery Parables Discourse, chapter 13; and (3) the Olivet Discourse, chapters 24 -- 25. The Sermon on the Mount is the manifesto of the King. The Mystery Parables Discourse gives the direction that the Kingdom of Heaven will take after Christ's rejection. The Olivet Discourse is prophetic, looking toward the future. There is a fourth discourse, recorded in John's Gospel, which deals with new truths and relationships in view of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. You and I are vitally connected with this latter discourse, by the way.

While the Sermon on the Mount is in [Matthew 5](#) -- 7, excerpts of it are in the other Gospels, also. It is unlikely that our Lord gave it only one time. He repeated, as you know, a great deal of the truths that He gave and probably gave this message, which we call the Sermon on the Mount, on many occasions. Luke records only a portion of it and mentions the fact that our Lord came down and stood on the plain, indicating that this was a different occasion. Frankly, Matthew's account is probably only a part of the Sermon on the Mount. I believe that our Lord gave a great deal more than we have here. However, this was given for our learning and our understanding today.

There are two things I would like to say by way of introduction to this section. One is that the far right and the far left are not confined to politics, but among theologians who expound Scripture we also have the far left and the far right. This is vividly revealed in the understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. The liberal theologian is to the far left. He treats the Sermon on the Mount as the gospel, the good news. He acts (even if he doesn't say it) as if it were the only important part of Scripture.

Many years ago I played handball with a very liberal preacher who later became rather famous as a leader of the liberal wing. One day he told me that all he needed of the Bible was the Sermon on the Mount. He went even so far as to say that all he needed was the Golden Rule, as recorded in [Matthew 7:12](#): "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." To say that this is all the Bible you need may sound good, but it is pious drivel. The question is not whether you feel that the Sermon on the Mount is your religion. The question is: Are you living it? That is the important thing, and we'll have more to say about that later.

Those who reduce the Christian message to the Sermon on the Mount represent a very large segment of liberalism in our day. But please notice that the content of the Christian gospel is not found in the Sermon on the Mount. For instance, there is absolutely no mention of the death and resurrection of Christ. Yet Paul said to the Corinthians, ". . . I declare unto you the gospel. . . ." What is the gospel? The Sermon on the Mount? No. Paul made it clear that the gospel is this: ". . . that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" ([1Cor. 15:1, 3-4](#); italics mine). My friend, the gospel is not in the Sermon on the Mount, and that is the reason a great many people like to claim it as their religion. The preaching of that doctrine has made more hypocrites in the church than anything

else. It is nothing in the world but verbiage for men to say, "I live by the Sermon on the Mount." If a man is honest and will read the Sermon on the Mount, he will know that he is not living up to it.

My friend, if the Sermon on the Mount is God's standard (and it is) and you come short of it, what are you going to do? Do you have a Savior who can extend mercy to you? Do you know the One who can reach down in grace and save you when you put your faith in Him?

To reduce the Christian message to the Sermon on the Mount is a simplicity which the Scriptures would not permit under any circumstances whatsoever. To do so is the extreme left point of view.

There is also the extreme right point of view. This group treats the Sermon on the Mount as if it were the bubonic plague. They have nothing to do with it. They give the impression that there is something ethically wrong with it. This group is known as hyper-dispensationalists. (Don't misunderstand, I am a dispensationalist but not a hyper-dispensationalist.) They maintain that we can't use the Sermon on the Mount at all. In fact, one of them told me that the Lord's Prayer has no meaning for us today. He was a prominent man, and after I heard him make that statement, I ran a sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. In fact, I have a book entitled Let Us Pray which deals with the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer does have meaning for us in our day. It is for us although it is not to us. But the extreme right want to rule it out entirely.

It is true that there is no gospel in the Sermon on the Mount, and it is tragic indeed to give it to unregenerate man as a standard of conduct, and to tell him that if he tries to measure up to it, he is a Christian.

The Sermon on the Mount is Law lifted to the nth degree. Man could not keep the Law in the Old Testament. So how in the world can he keep, in his own strength, the Sermon on the Mount which is elevated to an even higher degree?

It is likewise true that the *modus operandi* for Christian living is not really found in the Sermon on the Mount. It gives the ethic without supplying the dynamic. Living by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is just not one of the truths taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul says: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" ([Rom. 8:3-4](#)).

You don't find that teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It contains nothing of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. However, it does contain high ethical standards and practices which are not contrary to Christian living; in fact, it expresses the mind of Christ which should be the mind of the Christian also. The great principles set down here are profitable for the Christian to study and learn, but he can never attain them in his own strength; he must go elsewhere to look for the power. What you have in the Sermon on the Mount is a marvelous electric light bulb, but you do not have the generator that produces the power that will make the light. And it is the light, not the bulb, that is all important.

The primary purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is to set before men the law of the Kingdom. In Matthew we are talking about the King who has come to present Himself. John the Baptist was His forerunner, and the King called disciples to follow Him. Now He enunciates the law of the Kingdom. This is the manifesto of the King and the platform of the Prince of Peace. And it's law! It will be the law of this world during the Millennium, and then it will find full fruition. Christ will reign on earth in person and will enforce every word of it. The Sermon on the Mount will finally prevail when He whose right it is to rule shall come. Now it's inconceivable to me that anyone who acknowledges Him today as Lord would despise this document or turn from it. The Christian who calls Jesus Christ Lord, will seek to do what He commands, but he can obey only in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is worse than futile to try to force the Sermon on the Mount on a gainsaying and rebellious world. Only the gospel of the grace of God can make men obedient to Christ, and it was given to bring men into obedience to God.

The Sermon on the Mount needs to be preached to bring conviction to the hearts of men. This document lets men know that they have sinned, and it reveals that none are righteous and that all have come short of God's glory.

The Christian can take the principles set down in the Sermon on the Mount and consider them in the light of other Scriptures. This will provide a wider view and a better understanding of the mind of Christ. For example, only here can you find Christ's definition of murder and adultery. Christ took two of the commandments and lifted them to the nth degree, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery" ([Exod. 20:13-14](#)). Are these the only two which He lifted to a higher level? The answer seems to be obvious. These are the only two which are recorded in Matthew. Apparently, He did or could lift each commandment to a much higher level of attainment. If it could be said of the Mosaic Law, ". . . for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" ([Gal. 2:16](#)), then it would be ten times more difficult for a man to be justified by the Sermon on the Mount.

Try putting down upon your own life these two commandments: "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Let me illustrate what I mean by a little story. This incident took place during my first pastorate when I was a lot more blunt than I am now. An elder in the church I served in Nashville, Tennessee, invited me to speak at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon. This elder was a very wonderful man. He was the vice-president of a bank in the city, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and when he asked me to bring a brief message, he said, "You won't have but a few minutes, but I want you to give these businessmen the gospel." Well, I arrived at the place a little early, and there were several men standing around. I went up near the speaker's table, and there was a man there who shook hands with me and began to rip out oaths. I had never seen such a fine-looking, well-dressed man curse as this man did. Finally, he said to me, "What's your racket?" I told him that I was a preacher, and he began to cover up immediately. He apologized for his language. He didn't need to apologize to me; he needed to apologize to God because God heard him all the time -- which I told him. Then he wanted me to know that he was an officer in a certain liberal church, and he boasted, "The Sermon on the Mount is my religion."

"It is?" I said, "Let's shake hands. I congratulate you -- you've got a wonderful religion! By the way, how are you doing with it?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said that the Sermon on the Mount is your religion. Are you living by it?"

"Well I try."

"That's not quite it. The Lord said that you are blessed if you do those things, not if you vote for them. Are you keeping it?"

"I think I am."

"Do you mind if we take a little test?"

"All right."

"The Sermon on the Mount says that if you are angry with your brother you are guilty of murder. Are you keeping that one?"

"Well, that's pretty strong, but I don't think I have been angry enough to kill anyone."

Then I quoted the one the Lord gave on adultery: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" ([v. 28](#)), and asked him, "How about that one?"

"Oh, I guess that would get me."

"Well, I imagine that there are several things in the Sermon on the Mount that would get you. Apparently you are not living by your religion. If I were you, I'd change my religion and get something that works."

Oh, how many people there are like that man! They very piously say that the Sermon on the Mount is their religion, but all they mean is that they think it is a good document and a very fine expression, but it doesn't affect them one whit. I found out later that the man I was talking with had two wives -- one at home and one at his office. My friend, if the Sermon on the Mount is your religion, you had better make sure you are keeping it. It is loaded with law. But if you will look at the Sermon on the Mount honestly, it will bring you to a Savior who died for you on the cross. The Sermon on the Mount sets before us great principles and high goals. We need to know them, but they reveal how far we come short.

Matthew's record of the Sermon on the Mount is, I am sure, only a skeleton of Christ's actual message. I have divided it like this:

1. Relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom to self ([Matt. 5:1-16](#)).
- 2 [Matt. 2](#). Relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom to law ([Matt. 5:17-18](#)).
- 3 [Matt. 3](#). Relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom to God ([Matt. 6](#)).
- 4 [Matt. 4](#). Relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom to others ([Matt. 7](#)).

The Sermon on the Mount opens with the Beatitudes. It is well to note that they are be-attitudes, not do-attitudes. They state what the subjects of the Kingdom are -- they are the type of person described in the Beatitudes.

[Verse 1](#) makes it clear why this discourse is called the Sermon on the Mount.

First it should be noted that the Lord did not actually give the Sermon on the Mount to the multitudes. He gave it to His disciples, those who were already His.

Relationship Of The Subjects Of The Kingdom To Self (5:1-16)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying [[Matt. 5:1-2](#)].

Although He did not actually give the Sermon on the Mount to the multitudes, He gave it to the disciples because He saw the multitudes and their need. Therefore, it was given to the multitudes indirectly.

In our day, men need first to come to Christ. While the Kingdom is actually in abeyance, the present state of it is a place where the seed is being sown, and the seed is the Word of God. Our business in the world is to sow the seed, and the day is coming when Christ will establish His Kingdom upon this earth.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 5:3](#)].

This verse says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It doesn't tell you how to become poor in spirit; it just says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." In these twelve verses, our Lord used the word blessed nine times. By the way, the Psalms open with the same word: "Blessed is the man . . ." ([Ps. 1:1](#)). This is in contrast to the curses of the Mosaic Law. You may remember that Joshua was told that when the people of Israel were come over Jordan, they were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people. And then the curses were to be given from Mount Ebal. The blessings from the Sermon on the Mount are in sharp contrast to the curses from Mount Ebal, and they far exceed the blessings from Mount Gerizim, because Christ alone can bring those blessings. In our day only the saved sinner can know his poverty of spirit -- "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The Sermon on the Mount, instead of making folk poor in spirit, makes them boast -- like the man I referred to. He was boasting that the Sermon on the Mount was his religion, and he was trying to kid himself and kid me into thinking that he was keeping it. He wasn't keeping it at all; it was just making a hypocrite out of him. And there are a lot of those around.

I played golf one day in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with a very wealthy oil man. He told me, "I went to church just like the rest of the hypocrites, and I was one of them, talking about keeping the Sermon on the Mount. Then one day I found out that I was a lost sinner on the way to hell. I turned to Jesus Christ, and He saved me!" Oh, my friend, don't be deceived. Only the Spirit of God can reveal to you your poverty of spirit. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount was not telling His disciples how to become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. They already were citizens of the Kingdom.

We Christians today are actually very poor in spirit, we are spiritually bankrupt, but we have something to give which is more valuable than silver and gold. Paul expressed it this way: 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things' ([2Cor. 6:10](#)). "As poor, yet making many rich" is referring to spiritual riches which are available to everyone who belongs to Christ.

The next beatitude is:

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted [[Matt. 5:4](#)].

It is interesting to note that the same thoughts expressed in the Beatitudes can be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. The poor in spirit are referred to in [Zephaniah 3:12](#). Micah is an example of those who mourn and are comforted (see ch. 7).

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth [[Matt. 5:5](#)].

We find this in [Psalm 37:11](#). The meek are not inheriting the earth in this day in which we live -- I'm sure you recognize that. So apparently the Sermon on the Mount is not in effect today. However, when Christ is reigning, the meek will inherit the earth.

How do you become meek? Our Lord was meek and lowly, and He will inherit all things; we are the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. We are told that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance, and meekness. Only the Spirit of God can break you and make you meek. If you could produce meekness by your own effort, you would be proud of yourself, wouldn't you? And out goes your meekness! Meekness is not produced by self-effort but by Spirit effort. Only the Holy Spirit can produce meekness in the heart of a yielded Christian. The Christian who has learned the secret of producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit can turn here to the Beatitudes and read, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth," and see that the rewards of meekness are still in the future. Paul asked the Corinthian believers, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . ." ([1Cor. 6:2](#)).

The Beatitudes present goals which the child of God wants to realize in his own life, but he can't do it on his own. You may have heard of the preacher who had a message entitled "Meekness and How I Attained It." He said that he hadn't delivered his message yet, but as soon as he got an audience big enough, he was going to give it! Well, I have a notion that he had long since lost his meekness. Meekness can only be a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Then in verse six we are told:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled [[Matt. 5:6](#)].

What about the natural man; does he hunger and thirst for righteousness? The ones I meet do not! "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" ([1Cor. 2:14](#)). The "natural man" is in contrast to the spiritual man who has found that Christ is his righteousness -- ". . . of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" ([1Cor. 1:30](#)).

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy [[Matt. 5:7](#)].

This beatitude is so misunderstood in our day because it makes our obtaining mercy conditional on our being merciful. This is not the condition on which we obtain mercy -- "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" ([Titus 3:5](#), italics mine). We should be merciful because we have obtained mercy. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" ([1Pet. 2:9-10](#)).

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God [[Matt. 5:8](#)].

No honest man can say that his heart is pure. How can the heart of man, which is desperately wicked, be made clean? The Lord Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" ([John 15:3](#)). It is by the washing of regeneration that we are made clean. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from all sin (see [1John 1:7](#)).

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God [[Matt. 5:9](#)].

Can you name one peacemaker in the world right now? There is no one today who can make peace. Christ alone is the great Peacemaker. He made peace by His blood between a righteous God and an unrighteous sinner. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Rom. 5:1](#)).

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 5:10](#)].

The application of this beatitude to our day and to the remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation is easy to see. But can it apply to the Kingdom which is to be established? Won't all evil be removed in the Kingdom? Well, many Scriptures show that in the millennial Kingdom there will still be evil in the world because it will be a time of testing. The outbreak of rebellion at the end of the Millennium reveals that evil will be prevalent during the Millennium (see [Rev. 20:7-9](#)).

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid [[Matt. 5:13-14](#)].

God's people in any age and under any condition are both salt and light in the world. The Scots translate "savour" by the more expressive word tang. I like their word much better. "If the salt has lost its tang." The problem today is that most church members have not only lost their tang as salt, but as pepper they have lost their pep also. We have very few salt and pepper Christians in our day. Now salt doesn't keep fermentation and that type of thing from taking place, but it will arrest it. You and I ought to be the salt in the earth and have an influence for good in the world.

Christians are also the light of the world. Certainly in the Kingdom the believers are going to be the light of the world. This is a tremendous principle for us. We need to be a light in our neighborhood and wherever we go. We have no light within ourselves, but the Word of God is light. Being a light means giving out the Word of God in one way or another. This doesn't mean that you should be quoting Scripture all the time, but it does mean that you are to share the light that God has given you. It is very easy to cultivate some person, then quietly and graciously introduce them to a Bible-teaching church or radio program. There are many ways in which you can be light in the world.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 5:16](#)].

There are those of the liberal persuasion that feel the Sermon on the Mount is anthropocentric, or man-centered, rather than theocentric, or God-centered. (Those are their terms.) But, obviously, the Sermon on the Mount is not anthropocentric, man-centered. It is theocentric. Does this verse say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify you and pat you on the back, and give you a gold medal and a loving cup?" No! This verse says that you and I are to let our light so shine in this world that we may glorify our Father which is in heaven. The Sermon on the Mount is God-centered. During the Millennium, during the Kingdom here on earth, everything which is done and said will be God-centered. And in the present age, in this lost world in which you and I live today, our prime motivation should be to bring glory to God. This is something that every Christian should consider very seriously. The aim and purpose of our lives should be to glorify our God.

Relationship Of The Subjects Of The Kingdom To Law (5:17-48)

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [[Matt. 5:17](#)].

Remember that part of the Mosaic Law was the ceremonial law. Christ was the sacrifice for the sins of the world, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. Christ came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law. He fulfilled it in that He kept it during His earthly life. And the standard which was set before man He was able to attain, and now He is able to make over to you and me (and every believer) His own righteousness. God's standards have not changed, but you and I cannot attain them in our own strength. We need help; we need a Savior. We do need mercy, and we obtain mercy when we come to Christ.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled [[Matt. 5:18](#)].

I hope you don't misinterpret what I am saying in this section which we call the Sermon on the Mount. I am not saying that we are free to break the Mosaic Law. The fact of the matter is that the Law is still a standard. It reveals to me that I cannot measure up to God's standard. This drives me to the Cross of Christ. The only way I can fulfill the Law is by accepting the only One who could fulfill it -- Jesus Christ.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 5:19](#)].

You cannot break the commandments and get by with it. But you cannot keep them in your own strength. The only way you can keep them is to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, power, and strength. The commandments are not a way of salvation but a means to show you the way to salvation through the acceptance of the work of Jesus Christ.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 5:20](#)].

It is very important to see His point right here. The Pharisees had a high degree of righteousness according to the Law, but that was not acceptable. How can you and I surpass their righteousness? It is impossible in our own efforts. We need Christ to do it for us.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire [[Matt. 5:21-22](#)].

This is a tremendous statement! It means that if you are angry with your brother, you are a murderer! Do you claim to be keeping the Mosaic Law? You cannot break the Law and get by with it. You can't get by with mouthing the boast that the Sermon on the Mount is your religion and then break every part of it. My friend, both you and I need a Savior who has perfectly kept the Law and can impute to us His own righteousness.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing [[Matt. 5:26](#)].

Note that Jesus says, "Verily I say unto thee." He is lifting His teaching above the teaching of Moses. He is lifting Himself to the position of the Lawgiver and also the Interpreter, by the way.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart [[Matt. 5:27-28](#)].

For many years I have publicly made the statement that nobody but the Lord Jesus has ever kept the Law. One Sunday morning I repeated it in my message, and afterward a big, burly, red-faced fellow came to me and said, "You always say that nobody keeps the

Law. I want you to know that I keep the Law!" By the way, he belonged to a cult although he attended services at the church I pastored. Since he claimed to keep the Law, I said, "All right, let's look at it," and I showed him [verse 22](#) regarding hatred being the same as murder. He said that he kept that, although I don't believe that he did. So I gave him [verse 28](#) and said, "It says here that if you so much as look upon a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery. Now look me straight in the eye and tell me that you have never done that." He was red-faced to begin with, but you should have seen him then -- he was really red-faced. He grunted some sort of epithet, turned on his heels, and walked out. Of course, he walked out! And I say to you, if you are honest, you will not claim to be keeping the Law. Remember that there were ten commandments. Although Matthew mentions only these two that Christ dealt with, I am of the opinion that He lifted all ten of them to the nth degree.

Oh, my friend, the Sermon on the Mount shows me that I have sinned and that I need to come to Him for mercy and help. To say that you are living by the Sermon on the Mount while all the time you are breaking it is to declare that the Law is not important.

In the following verses the Lord deals in a tremendous way with the Law and man's relationship to it.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee:
for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish,
and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee:
for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish,
and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [[Matt. 5:29-30](#)].

This is severe, very severe, and it reveals, friends, that if you cannot meet God's standards, you need a Savior. Don't kid yourself and fool around with pretending that you are keeping the Law. You are only being a hypocrite. In Christian circles we are intent upon patting each other on the back and complimenting one another and giving each other credit for what we do when all the time we all are a pack of low-down, dirty, rotten sinners, not even fit for heaven. The Sermon on the Mount ought to drive you to the Cross of Christ where you cry out for mercy. To do that is to honor the Law, my friend. Don't try to kid me into thinking that you are keeping it. I know you're not -- because you are just like I am.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give
her a writing of divorcement:

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving
for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and
whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery
[[Matt. 5:31-32](#)].

Here the Lord gives the grounds for divorce. If someone is divorced for a reason not given in Scripture, that person is an adulterer. This is something that is entirely ignored today in Christian circles. This, however, will be the Law during the Kingdom age

because there will be men and women who will want to leave their mates during that period. We will deal with the divorce question in some detail when we get to chapter 19.

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time,
Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord
thine oaths:

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is
God's throne:

Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it
is the city of the great King [[Matt. 5:33-35](#)].

The Lord Jesus is saying that we are to be the kind of persons who don't have to take an oath. As a boy, I can remember that my dad could go into the bank and borrow money, then come back a couple of days later to sign the note. Or he could call the bank by phone and have a certain amount of money credited to his account. Well, believe me, it is different in our day. Why? Because there are a lot more folk today who cannot be trusted. The Lord says that the child of God, under all circumstances, should be trustworthy. The Lord says:

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever
is more than these cometh of evil [[Matt. 5:37](#)].

When a man says to me, "I'd swear on a stack of Bibles a mile high," that is the fellow I do not believe because I think the lie he's telling is a mile high.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a
tooth for a tooth [[Matt. 5:38](#)].

All of that will be changed when Christ is reigning in His Kingdom.

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall
smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also [[Matt. 5:39](#)].

Do you live like this, or do you resist evil? There is a principle for us here, but we are living in a day when a wise man armed keepeth his house. And Paul could say, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works" ([2Tim. 4:14](#)). In the Kingdom you will be able to turn the other cheek. It reminds me of the Irishman whom someone hit on the cheek and knocked down. The Irishman got up and turned his other cheek. The fellow knocked him down again. This time the Irishman got up and beat the stuffin' out of that fellow. An observer asked, "Why did you do that?" "Well," replied the Irishman, "the Lord said to turn the other cheek and I did, but He never told me what to do after that."

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let
him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of
thee turn not thou away [[Matt. 5:40-42](#)].

If you have a banker who says that he is living by the Sermon on the Mount, give this verse to him and see how far you get with it. Let's quit being hypocrites and realize that this is the law of the Kingdom. When my Lord is on the throne down here on this earth, folk can live this way. In our day, business could not be conducted by this law. Years ago Archbishop McGee of Ireland said that it was impossible to conduct the affairs of the British nation on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount. I do not know whether I am related to Archbishop McGee or not, but I certainly find that I think as he did about the Sermon on the Mount. Although it contains great principles for the Christian in our day, it can be enforced only when Christ is on the throne. I think that ought to be quite obvious.

In our contemporary society many of the wealthy churches say that they follow the Sermon on the Mount. That is what the congregation gets as a steady diet on Sunday morning. However, if you go to the rich and try to get something from them, you won't get very far, I assure you. On Sunday they hear, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." It sounds great. They think the Sermon on the Mount is a great document, but on Monday morning it is cold-blooded business and cash on the barrelhead. That, of course, is the way the business world is set up today.

However, there is a great principle in these verses for us, and we should not miss that. Certainly we should be helpful to those who are in need. And there are many fine Christian acts that can be performed by believers. Historically, hospitals, orphan homes, and works of charity (which the Bible calls acts of love) have followed the preaching of the gospel. I do not know any place on earth where they preceded the gospel, but they always followed it. There should be the fruit of good works in a believer's life.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you [[Matt. 5:43-44](#)].

This rule, I insist, is for the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus lifts the Mosaic Law to the nth degree. He says that in the Kingdom the enemy is to be loved instead of hated.

The believer today operates on a different principle. We are commanded to love all believers, and we express our love to our enemies by getting the gospel to them, giving them the message of God's saving grace that is able to bring them to heaven.

In concluding this chapter, our Lord says that we are to be perfect --

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect [[Matt. 5:48](#)].

How is it possible for you and me to be perfect? We are accepted in Christ, in the beloved.

There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ, and we get in Christ by faith in Him. The only way we can become perfect is through our faith in Christ -- Christ imputes

to us His righteousness. And then begins the slow process of sanctification in which God attempts to conform us to the image of His Son. This, of course, should be the goal of every believer. But seeking to attain perfection by our own efforts is absolutely futile. Do you think that you can go to God and say, "Look what I have done: look how wonderful I am," trying to get all the glory for yourself and to force God to save you on that basis? My friend, you are going to do nothing of the kind because you and I are not perfect. Most of us remember this:

Little Jack Horner Sat in a corner Eating a Christmas pie; He put in his thumb, And pulled out a plum, And said, What a good boy am I!

We see a lot of that in religion today. Little folk sit around, reach in their thumb, and pull out a plum and say, "What a good boy am I!" My friend, you and I are not good by God's standards. We need a Savior.

As we have seen, in this chapter the King speaks of the righteousness which His subjects must possess. And it must be a righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. They had a religious righteousness. For instance, Nicodemus was an outstanding man, and he was religious. You can't find much to criticize about him. But our Lord said to him, "You have to be born again" (see [John 3:1-8](#)). Now we have to have a righteousness superior to that of the scribes and the Pharisees, and it can only come through trust in Christ.

Chapter 6

THEME: The inner motives which govern external acts of righteousness, such as the giving of alms, prayer, fasting, and the getting of riches; the relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven to God

The Motive And Method Of Giving Alms (6:1-4)

Chapter 6 of Matthew deals with the external part of religion. We have seen in chapter 5 that the King speaks of the righteousness which His subjects must possess. It must be a righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and that comes only through trust in Christ. In chapter 6 Matthew talks about the righteousness that the subjects of the Kingdom are to practice. The motive, of course, is the important thing in what you do for God. No third party can enter into this relationship. These things are between the soul and God.

The items mentioned in this chapter -- the giving of alms, prayer, fasting, money, and taking thought and care for the future -- are very practical considerations.

First, our Lord talks about alms. Keep in mind that all of this has to do with externalities of religion or with ostentation in religion.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 6:1](#)].

Although the Lord Jesus is directing His remarks to the subjects of His coming Kingdom, there is a great principle here for you and me.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward [[Matt. 6:2](#)].

He is saying this with biting irony. Believe me, He knew how to use the rapier of sarcasm! When the Pharisees wanted to give something to the poor, it was their custom to go down to a busy street corner in Jerusalem and blow a trumpet. Although the purpose was to call the poor and needy together to receive the gifts, it afforded a fine opportunity to let others see their good works. Do you see parallels today in the way some Christians give? Our Lord said that when the Pharisees do it that way, they have their reward. What was their reward? Well, what was it that they were after? Jesus said they did it to have glory of men. They blew the trumpet, and everybody came running out to see how generously they gave, and that was their reward. Their giving was not between themselves and God.

Now, why do you give? There is more than one way to give. Several years ago I was asked to take an offering in a certain organization. I was told to be sure and give everybody an opportunity to stand up and tell how much he would give. For example, I was instructed to say, "How many will give one hundred dollars?" I asked, "Why in the world do you take an offering like that?" I was told that a certain man would attend who would give only one dollar if a regular offering was taken. However, if the question of how many would give one hundred dollars was asked, he would give that amount. May I say that he blew a trumpet. And I discovered when I came to know this man that this was the way he gave.

There are other people who give large checks but want to hand them to you personally. There was a man in my church who always gave me a check before I went into the pulpit. He thought this would excite me enough so that I would mention it. A friend of his came to me one day and said, "So-and-so is disturbed." He went on to explain that I did not acknowledge the very large check his friend had given me last Sunday. "That's right," I said, and told this man the reason why. "Your friend is a man of means and the check he gave me, in relationship to what he has, wasn't very much. Last Sunday a mail-carrier also handed me an envelope. He didn't want me to open it until after the service and did not want me to say a word to anyone about it. He gave me almost twice as much money as the man of means did. If I were going to acknowledge anybody, it would have to be the mail-carrier -- but he didn't want me to do that."

May I say to you that giving is between you and God, and the very minute you get a third party involved, you don't get any credit in heaven.

There is a lot of so-called Christian giving today that isn't giving at all. For example, the college I graduated from played on human nature. While I was in school, beautiful architectural plans were drawn up for a tower to be put on an old hall. It was modestly announced that the tower would be named after the donor. At least a half dozen people wanted their names on that tower. Today it is called "So-and-so Tower" in honor of a certain man. His name is carved in stone which means that his trumpet is being blown all the time. A lot of people give like that. This kind of giving is worth nothing before God.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly [[Matt. 6:3-4](#)].

Don't reach in your pocket with one hand and then put the other hand in the air to let people know how much you are giving! Our Lord is saying that when you put your hand in your pocket to get something to give, be so secretive about it that the other hand doesn't know what you are doing. All of this is biting sarcasm.

Do our liberal friends really live by the Sermon on the Mount? I don't think they do!

The Marks Of Genuine Prayer (6:5-13)

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward [[Matt. 6:5](#)].

"Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are" -- my, our Lord used strong language, didn't He! "They have their reward." They pray so that they may be seen of men. A man might go wearing a prayer shawl, which advertises the fact that he is praying. Jesus said that when a man prays like that, he has his reward. He gets what he wants -- that is, to be seen of men. But his prayer never gets above the rafters of the building.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly [[Matt. 6:6](#)].

The concept we are dealing with here is revolutionary. Did you notice that the Lord uses the term Father? These are citizens of the Kingdom that the Lord is talking about. How do you become a child of God today? [John 1:12](#) gives us the answer: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that [do no more or less than] believe on his name." Our Lord even said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (see [John 3:3](#)) -- until then, you can't call God your Father. And in the Old Testament you will not find the word Father used in relation to a man with God. The nation Israel as a whole was called by God, ". . . Israel is my son . . ." ([Exod. 4:22](#)), but not an individual. The Lord Jesus is speaking of a new relationship.

Concerning the subject of prayer, we are told that it should be secret and sincere. Many an unknown saint of God will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ as a real person of prayer.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking [[Matt. 6:7](#)].

I heard a fellow pray the other day, and he repeated his petition about a dozen times. The Lord Jesus says that if we ask the Father one time, He hears us.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him [[Matt. 6:8](#)].

Prayer should be marked by sincerity and simplicity:

1. Sincerity -- [Matthew 6:6](#). Go in and close the door -- your prayer is between you and God.
2. Simplicity -- [Matthew 6:7](#). Don't use vain repetition. Get right down to the nitty-gritty and tell the Lord what you have on your mind. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" [v. 8](#). Even though He already knows what we need, He wants us to come to Him and ask.

Now He gives us a sample prayer -- "After this manner therefore pray ye."

Before we look at this so-called Lord's Prayer, let me say that I never use it in a public service. I don't think that a Sunday morning crowd should get up and pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" when they have a roast in the oven at home -- they already have their meal. It is a very meaningful prayer for those who are hungry, but a well-fed Sunday morning congregation ought not to pray this because for them it is vain repetition.

However, it is a wonderful model prayer for believers of all conditions.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name [[Matt. 6:9](#)].

Notice that this so-called Lord's Prayer could not be the prayer of the Lord Jesus. He couldn't pray this prayer. He couldn't join with you and me and say, "Our Father" because the relationship between the Father and the Son is the relationship in deity. It is a position, not a begetting. I became a son of God only through faith in Christ; therefore Christ couldn't join with me in saying, "Our Father."

"Which art in heaven." God is not a prisoner in this universe -- He is beyond and above it. He is in the air spaces, in the stellar spaces, but He is far removed from His universe today. He is more than creation! He is the One sitting upon the throne of the universe, and He has it under His control!

"Hallowed be thy name," more correctly translated, would read, "Let thy name be made holy." The name of God stands for God, for all that God is. In what way can you and I make God's name holy? It is my conviction that by our lives we are to make God's name holy. When Abraham went into Canaan, a Canaanite passing by observed that they had a new neighbor, for he had seen Abraham's altar. Everywhere Abraham went he built an altar to God. And when Abraham began to do business with the Canaanites, they found him to be honest. They found that everything Abraham said invited their confidence. Finally, they reached the conclusion that the God whom Abraham worshiped was a holy God, and Abimelech said to Abraham, ". . . God is with thee in all that thou doest" ([Gen. 21:22](#)). The children of Heth said, ". . . thou art a mighty prince among us . . ." ([Gen. 23:6](#)). The entire life of Abraham revealed the reverence he felt for God. Surely the name of God was made holy in Canaan because of Abraham.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven
[\[Matt. 6:10\]](#).

"Thy kingdom come" is the Kingdom about which Matthew has been speaking, the Kingdom which Christ will establish on this earth. This is a worthy petition for all of us to pray.

Give us this day our daily bread [\[Matt. 6:11\]](#).

As I have indicated, this prayer is a model for our own prayers. Now I want you to notice this petition for a moment. It is a wonderful petition, so simple yet one that should come from our hearts with great enthusiasm. It speaks of our utter dependence upon God. Our bodily wants, our physical necessities, all are supplied by Him day by day. "Give us . . . our daily bread" -- just as Israel gathered manna for the day, they gathered nothing for the morrow. They were not permitted to gather manna for the next week. They could not hoard it. This prayer gathers manna every day, "Give us this day our daily bread." It shows man that he lives from hand to mouth. It shows man that even his bodily necessities, his basic needs, come from God.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors [\[Matt. 6:12\]](#).

Our Lord Jesus could not pray this -- He had no sin to be forgiven. You see, it is not the Lord's prayer; it is the disciples' prayer.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive those that are indebted to us" is legalistic; it is not grace. I thank God for another verse of Scripture, [Ephesians 4:32](#), "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Today God is forgiving us on the basis of what Christ has done for us, not on the basis by which we forgive -- as touching the matter of our salvation. The redemption of God is in full view when God forgives us. It does not refer to our salvation when we read, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." He is speaking here to those who are already saved, those who already have the nature of God. He does not wait for you to forgive before He forgives. This is not His method of settling the sin question. He gave His Son to die, and it is on this basis that God forgives.

In some churches today where there is formal religion, liturgy, and ritual, they use "forgive us our debts" while others will use "forgive us our trespasses." Two little girls were talking about the Lord's Prayer as repeated in their churches. One said, "We have trespasses in our church," and the other said, "Well, in our church we have debts." (Probably they both were right as far as the churches of our day are concerned -- they have both debts and trespasses.) So which phrase is accurate? There is no difficulty here at all since all of these words refer to the same thing, and that thing is sin.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine
is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen
[\[Matt. 6:13\]](#).

"Lead us not into temptation." This word lead gives us the wrong impression because James says God does not tempt any man. That is true -- God does not tempt any man. A better translation here would be, "Leave us not in temptation." It does not mean to keep us out of it, but when we are in it, do not leave us there.

"Deliver us from evil" -- this deliverance is from the evil one. Deliver us from the evil one -- deliver us from the Devil. Satan is today an awful reality. The world has tried many times to get rid of him. They laughed at Martin Luther who threw an inkwell at him. But recently we have had a turn in events. Any man who stands for God knows the awful reality of Satan. As we work in any church we become conscious of the presence of God and also dreadfully conscious of the presence of Satan. But we have this petition, "Deliver us from the evil one."

May I say that this is a marvelous prayer for a new believer to pray privately in learning to pray. My own mother was not saved until late in life. She didn't know how to pray, and she began by just repeating the Lord's Prayer. Finally she graduated from this, and she could pray her own prayer.

When we are teaching our children to pray, we begin them with, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Then one day little Willie adds, "God bless Mama and God bless Papa." That is a thrilling moment for us, because they are beginning to pray on their own. And our Lord gave the so-called Lord's Prayer as a model. It is a glorious, wonderful prayer, and it shows us what we should include in our own prayers. He would like us to learn to pray in our own words when we talk to Him.

As the Lord Jesus said in the verses preceding the Lord's Prayer, prayer is not to be done for display. It is a relationship between you and God, and the most effective prayer is when you enter into your closet -- that is, a private place. I am not enthusiastic about public prayer meetings because of the fact that the deadest service of any in the church is the prayer meeting. As a pastor, I used to try to build up the prayer meeting, but I soon discovered that if you have fifty dead saints praying, you don't improve it by getting a hundred dead saints. It still is a pretty dead prayer meeting. What we need is a great deal more private prayer. It should take place between an individual and God.

The Meaning Of Fasting (6:16-18)

The Lord moves on now to the subject of fasting.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward [[Matt. 6:16](#)].

Fasting has a value for believers in our day, I am convinced of that, but only if it is done privately. It should be a personal matter between the soul and God.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly [[Matt. 6:17-18](#)].

The Making Of Money And The Meaning Of Real Riches (6:19-21)

The Lord next turns to the subject of money. This is something many people don't like the preacher to talk about.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also [[Matt. 6:19-21](#)].

A great many folk think that money cannot be used in a spiritual way and that when you talk about money, you are talking about something that is only material. However, our Lord says that we are to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. How can we do that? Well, instead of putting it in a bank in Switzerland, put it in heaven by giving it to the Lord's work down here -- but make sure it is in the Lord's work. You ought to investigate everything you give to. Make sure that you are giving to that which will accumulate treasure for you in heaven. If it is used for the propagation of the gospel and to get out the Word of God, it becomes legal tender in heaven, and that is how we gather treasure in heaven.

Perhaps you are saying, "But I don't give for that reason." You ought to, because our Lord said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." That is a laudable motive for giving. And He gives the reason: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If you get enough treasure laid up in heaven, you are certainly going to think a lot about heaven. But if it is in the bank, your thoughts are going to be on the bank. There is an ever-present danger of worshipping mammon rather than God.

Material Things And The Christian's Relationship To Them (6:26-34)

[Matthew 6](#) concludes with our Lord talking about other things that are material. He tells us that we are not to give much thought to our material needs. For example, the Lord says:

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [[Matt. 6:26](#)].

Birds cannot sow. Birds cannot reap. Birds cannot gather anything into barns, but you and I can. We are to sow, reap, and gather with the same abandon that a little bird has. The little bird is trusting God to take care of him, and we are to trust Him, also. "Are ye not much better than they?" This does not mean that we shouldn't exercise judgment, because God has given us this ability. Once a Christian asked me, "Do you think a Christian ought to have insurance?" My reply was, "Yes!" Insurance is one means we have today to put our minds at ease concerning the care of our families and ourselves. The important thing is that we are not to go through life with material things becoming a burden to us.

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin [[Matt. 6:28](#)].

In this verse the question is asked, "Why take ye thought for raiment?" Think of the time that is consumed by both men and women when it comes to buying clothes. And almost everyone has had the experience at some time of saying, "I can't go tonight, I don't have the right suit or dress to wear." Well, consider the lilies of the field. They cannot toil or spin, and yet God takes care of them. Of course, a Christian should dress as well as he can. To be slovenly in dress or in any action is not honoring to God. Our Lord called attention to the beauty of the flowers --

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these [[Matt. 6:29](#)].

I think He wants us to be as beautiful as possible. Some of us don't have much to work with, but we ought to do the best we can with what we've got.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? [[Matt. 6:30](#)].

We are not to be overly anxious about the things of this world. Material things should not be the goal of our life.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof [[Matt. 6:33-34](#)].

"Take . . . no thought for the morrow" means no anxious thought. He takes care of the flowers and the birds, and He will take care of you. But the important thing is to put Him first in our life.

As someone has said, "Today is the tomorrow that we worried about yesterday." How true that is for many of us!

Chapter 7

THEME: The relationship of the child of the King with other children of the King maintained by prayer; and final warnings about the two ways, false prophets, false profession, and the two foundations

Judgment Of Others Forbidden (7:1-5)

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again [[Matt. 7:1-2](#)].

These verses have really been misunderstood. To judge can mean "to decide, to distinguish, to condemn, to avenge," and it actually can mean "to damn." These verses do not mean that a child of God is forbidden to judge others, but it does mean that we are not

to judge the inward motives of others in the sense of condemning them. We do not know or understand why a brother in Christ does a certain thing. We see only outward acts. God doesn't forbid our judging wrong and evil actions, as we will see. The point is that if you are harsh in your judgments of others, you will be known as the type of person who is severe in his considerations of others. I know this type of person, and I am sure you do, also. Perhaps somebody has said to you, "Don't pay any attention to what he says; he never has a good word to say." You see, he is being judged by the way he judges. This is what our Lord is saying in these verses.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? [[Matt. 7:3](#)].

He is comparing a little piece of sawdust in your brother's eye to the great big redwood log in your own eye. The "log" is the spirit of criticism and prejudice. With that blocking your vision, you are in no position to judge the little sin of another.

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye [[Matt. 7:4-5](#)].

This matter of harsh judgment is certainly something about which we need to be very careful. Although Jesus makes it clear that we are not to sit in harsh judgment upon another, He also said that by their fruits we would know them. The late Dr. James McGinley put it in his rather unique fashion, "I am no judge, but I am a fruit inspector." And we can really tell whether or not a Christian is producing fruit.

Judgment Of Others Enjoined (7:6)

Now He really puts us on the horns of a dilemma.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you [[Matt. 7:6](#)].

We have to determine who the dogs are and who the pigs are, don't we? These are not four-legged animals He is talking about. We are not to give that which is holy unto dogs or cast our pearls before swine; therefore, there is a judgment that we need to make.

There are certain times and places where it is not worthwhile to say a word. This is a judgment you need to make. I remember a Tennessee legislator friend of mine who was a heavy drinker. He was wonderfully converted and is a choice servant of God today. The other members of the legislature knew how he drank. Then they heard he "got religion," as they called it. One day this fellow took his seat in the legislature, and his fellow-members looked him over. Finally, someone rose, addressed the chairman of the meeting, and said, "I make a motion that we hear a sermon from Deacon So-and-So." Everyone laughed. But my friend was equal to the occasion. He got to his feet and said, "I'm sorry, I do not have anything to say. My Lord told me not to cast my pearls before swine." He sat down, and they never ridiculed him anymore.

A police inspector in the city of New York told me about certain apartments which were filled with no one but homosexuals. He told me, "They know I'm a Christian, and when they are brought into the station, they say to me 'Preach us a sermon!' But I never cast my pearls before swine." He looked at me and said, "I guess you think I'm a little hard-boiled, but I was a flatfoot in that area, and I know those folk. I worked with them for years."

May I say to you, there are swine and there are dogs in our society. What are we to do? Jesus tells us that we are not to judge, and then He tells us we are to judge. Well, He tells us in the next verse what we are to do.

Prayer, The Way Out Of The Dilemma (7:7-12)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened [[Matt. 7:7-8](#)].

How to meet the people of this world is the greatest problem facing a child of God. Every day we rub shoulders with princes and paupers, gentlemen and scoundrels, true and false professors. Some folk need our friendship and help, and we need them, and we ought to pull them to our hearts. Others are rascals and will destroy us, and we need to push them from us. How are we to know? To ask, seek, and knock definitely refers to this problem. These verses can be used for other situations also, but it is this situation that they have primary reference to.

While I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles for twenty-one years, I met people from all walks of life. It took me thirty minutes to drive from my home to the church, and during that time I would tell the Lord I was going to meet some new people during the day and would ask Him to please tell me how I should act with each one. Some people would need my help, but others might try to put a knife in my back. You would be surprised how many times I have been fooled by people. Isn't it interesting that Peter, in the early church, knew Ananias and Sapphira were lying ([Acts 5:1-11](#))? I can never tell when someone is lying. I do not have the spiritual discernment that they had in the early church. I believe it is a gift that only some people have today, and it is important to make discernment a matter of prayer. When you meet new friends, do you ever ask God to make it clear to you how to treat them? I have found out that it is a good idea to do this.

The next verses go on to say that God wants to help you in these matters.

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? [[Matt. 7:9-11](#)].

Now the so-called Golden Rule comes right in here --

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets [[Matt. 7:12](#)].

All right, when you meet somebody new, how are you going to treat him? You don't know -- you are not to judge -- but if he is a dog or a swine, you had better know. You have to beware of phonies today. So what do you do? Make it a matter of prayer. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the principle on which you should operate. "Therefore" is the most important word in the Golden Rule. It relates the Golden Rule to that which precedes it. That is, it postulates it on prayer. It all comes together in one package. Don't lift out the Golden Rule and say that you live by it. Understand what the Lord is talking about. Only as we "ask, seek, and knock" are we able to live in the light of the Golden Rule.

The Two Ways (7:13-23)

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it [[Matt. 7:13-14](#)].

The picture which is given here is not that of a choice between a broad white way with lots of fun and a narrow, dark, uninviting alley. Actually, He is giving a picture of a funnel. If you enter the funnel at the broad end, it keeps narrowing down until you come to death, destruction, and hell. But you can enter the funnel at the narrow part. That's where Christ is -- He is the way, the truth, and the life. He says, ". . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" ([John 10:10](#)). And the longer you walk with Him, the wider it gets. Remember that in Ezekiel's prophecy (ch. 47) there was a river flowing out from the throne of God which began as a little stream and widened out until it became a great river. That pictures the life of a child of God -- it gets better every day. This is what our Lord was talking about.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [[Matt. 7:15-16](#)].

Israel was warned against false prophets, and the church is warned against false teachers, but both classes come in sheep's clothing. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" ([2Pet. 2:1](#)). We are to recognize them by their fruits. That is what we are to watch for in their lives.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 7:21](#)].

You can run around and mouth about living by the Golden Rule, but the point is: Are you doing the will of the Father in heaven? If you are doing His will, you'll come to Christ, recognizing that you need a Savior.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [[Matt. 7:22-23](#)].

Obviously these verses do not refer to believers today. Every believer, living or dead, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. None will hear the Lord say, "depart from me." This passage has particular reference to the Great Tribulation period and the Millennium. This is the place to suggest that the Sermon on the Mount will have a particular meaning for the remnant during the Great Tribulation.

Also, there is a needed warning here for professing church members -- in fact, for all believers. Folk talk enthusiastically about certain so-called miracle workers today, and they say to me, "You can tell God is with them." In light of these verses, can we be sure of that? The name of Christ is on the lips of many people who are leaders of cults and "isms." Just to use the name of Christ and the Bible is not proof that a system is genuine. It is not the outward profession but the inward relationship to a crucified but living Savior that is all-important.

The Two Foundations (7:24-29)

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock [[Matt. 7:24-25](#)].

If you have come to Christ, He is the foundation -- "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1Cor. 3:11](#)). When you are resting on Christ, you can build on that foundation. By yielding to the Holy Spirit, you can build a life which the Bible likens to gold, silver, and precious stones.

But there is another kind of building --

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it [[Matt. 7:26-27](#)].

What is that sand? It is human goodness and human effort. It is the old weakness of the flesh. My friend, I say to you that you need something better than the flesh has to offer.

Matthew concludes this section by saying --

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes [[Matt. 7:28-29](#)].

Our Lord Jesus was that kind of teacher -- He taught with authority; He wasn't just repeating something He had read. And you and I need to recognize that we have nothing worthwhile to say unless it is with the authority of the Word of God and unless we believe it is the Word of God. I don't want to hear a man who gives me a string of theories, theories which he himself has never tried and actually knows nothing about. Today we have a gospel to give, a message of salvation. We know it works because it has worked in our case. And we have seen it work in the lives of others who have come to Christ.

My friend, the Sermon on the Mount is a glorious passage of Scripture. Don't bypass it. If you read it aright, it will bring you to the person of Jesus Christ. It will show you how you fail to measure up to its precepts. It will show you that you are weak and guilty. It will make you cry for mercy and will bring you to the person of Christ for salvation. When you accept Christ as Savior, He will give you the Holy Spirit who will enable you to live on this high standard.

The Sermon On The Mount In Perspective (7:24-29)

Now that we have concluded the Sermon on the Mount, I feel that we need to back off and get a perspective of it because many of my comments may have been new and strange to some folk. A great many people feel that the Sermon on the Mount states the way believers are to live in our contemporary society, that it is given to the church.

However, if we step back and look at the Word of God as a whole, we will see that God has given three great systems by which He is to govern and rule mankind.

The first one is the Mosaic system, the Law. As you know, early in Genesis (ch. 7) is the record that God had to destroy the entire human race (with the exception of one man and his family) because of their violence and because ". . . every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" ([Gen. 6:5](#)). The human family had departed from God, and He had to judge it. Out of the earth He could save only one man and his family, and from these God began a movement toward drawing out of this new population a man who would become the father of a people who would be a witness for Him. Actually, He was going to give them a land, and He was going to make them a great nation -- numberless -- and He was going to make them a blessing to the world. God, through them, was to reach the world. He gave them through Moses the Mosaic system, and it was a great sacrificial system. The Book of Exodus gives us the details of it and reveals that the very heart of it was the burnt altar where sacrifices were offered. That altar speaks of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God never forgave a sin apart from a sacrifice that was made, because, you see, the Law did not save man. It only revealed to man that he was a sinner. It became a system of condemnation, not a system of salvation. Therefore, throughout the Old Testament the burnt offerings pointed to the coming of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus came and offered Himself as the King in order to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. But His nation rejected Him.

The Gospel of Matthew presents Him as King. It is my personal conviction that everything in this Gospel is to be understood in the light of the fact that He is the King. In the Gospel of Matthew, as we have indicated, He was born a King, He lived a King, He died a King, He rose again from the dead as a King, and He is coming again to this earth as a King.

One of the things that He did while He was here on earth was to enunciate a law that was different from the Mosaic Law. It was the so-called Sermon on the Mount, recorded in [Matthew 5](#) -- [Matthew 7](#). Excerpts of it are found in the other Gospels, but in Matthew it is given in its fullest extent. As I have mentioned, I am confident that it is an abridged edition, and the evidence of this is that He took two of the Mosaic commandments and lifted them to a higher degree of interpretation than they ever had been held in the Old Testament. For example, He said that if you are angry with your brother, you are guilty of murder. There is nothing about that in the Old Testament. Also, He said that if you so much as look upon a woman to commit adultery in your heart, that you are guilty of it. Believe me, friend, that involves half the human race today. There are very few men who are not guilty of breaking that commandment. Sometime ago a very fine looking woman, a wonderful Christian, and an excellent Bible teacher, told about meeting a certain man, and he happened to be a preacher. She said, "When he looked at me, I could tell what he was doing. He was undressing me, and I think he would have tried to rape me." The man never moved an eyelash, he was just sitting watching the woman approach him. According to the Sermon on the Mount, he was guilty of adultery.

The Sermon on the Mount lifts the Law to the nth degree. Somebody asks, "Isn't that what we are to live by today?" No, it is for the Kingdom which is coming on the earth. At that time we will probably have the unabridged edition of the Sermon on the Mount. It will be the law of the Kingdom, which Christ will set up in the future. There are great principles in it for us, but we have been given a different system. You and I are living in what is called the age of grace or the age of the Holy Spirit. It is a time when God saves by grace, not by keeping a law, not by following a law. We are not saved by anything that we do. Frankly, friend, you are not a Christian until you believe something, and that something is ". . . that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" ([1Cor. 15:3-4](#)). That is the gospel; that is what saves you.

After you have been saved, God has a way for you to live, and that way is not the Mosaic Law, not the Ten Commandments. Oh, I know what all the great denominations teach. I was brought up and educated in one of them. My Shorter Catechism, when it comes to the subject of sanctification and how to live for God, drags in the Ten Commandments. Suppose you did keep all ten of the commandments (which you don't), that wouldn't save you, because that which saves you is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Law cannot save you.

Neither is the Law a way of life; it is not the Christian way of life. Immediately someone asks, "Does that mean you can break it?" Of course it does not give you freedom to break

it. It merely means that we have a way of life which is much higher than the Ten Commandments. "But," you may argue, "you have just said that the Sermon on the Mount lifts the Law to the nth degree, so that must be our way of life." No, that's not it. Have you ever stopped to consider if you could keep the Sermon on the Mount?

Are you ready for some startling statements? The Sermon on the Mount has made more hypocrites in the church than anything else. I told you the story of a man who was a church member and an officer but who could cuss like a proverbial sailor, and he thought he was a Christian. When I turned on the light of the Sermon on the Mount, I found that all he did was vote for it; he just approved of it. He didn't keep it. He could not live by it. No one can live by it. You see, it provides a veneer of religion which a great many people assume when their heart is not changed. The heart of man has to be changed.

As a result, liberalism is not only found in politics, but liberalism in theology has played a great part. They talk about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Well, the Lord Jesus contradicted that theory when He said even to the religious rulers of His day, "Ye are of your father the devil . . ." ([John 8:44](#)). Evidently, there were some folk in that day who couldn't call God their Father. The universal fatherhood of God did not apply then, and it does not apply today. Since World War II, the United States has attempted to deal with the world in a spirit of brotherly love. We are hated by many of the nations of the world today and are envied by the rest of them. We have spent literally billions of dollars to buy peace, and we do not have peace in the world today. Why? Because, friend, you cannot run the world by the Sermon on the Mount. We have had politicians who have tried to put these principles to work. Well, aren't the principles good? Of course they are good, but there is something wrong. What is wrong? It is the heart of man that is wrong. Man is the problem.

A listener to our radio program wrote, saying, "Dr. McGee, I don't have problems; I am the problem!" That is the difficulty in the world. There is nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments. They have come from God. They reveal His mind, His will. The Sermon on the Mount reveals the mind and will of God as well. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with either of those. But there is something radically wrong with mankind.

Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew; He will tell you where the problem is. He says, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" ([Matt. 15:18-20](#)).

You can have a religion that requires the washing of hands and body, and you can go through any kind of ritual or liturgy, but the heart is the problem. Man has a desperate case of heart trouble today, and jogging won't help him. He needs Jesus, not jogging. The Lord Jesus Christ alone can change the heart by a miracle known as regeneration. He told even a nice, respectable Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus that he must be born again. Although the phrase born again is being misused and abused in our day, it is a marvelous, miraculous truth.

My friend, I say to you that you and I have to be regenerated because we've got this old nature. When the Lord Jesus talked about what comes out of the heart, He was not talking

about the heart of Joe Doaks, although his is included; He was talking about my heart and your heart. You see, the heart is the problem.

The apostle Paul enlarged upon this fact. He said, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like . . ." ([Gal. 5:19-21](#)).

Now we live in a day of situation ethics. We live in a day of gross immorality. People have thrown overboard the so-called Judeo-Christian ethic, and they do as they please. I heard a college professor being interviewed on television. He was asked the question: What is right in our day? His answer was: Anything is right if it makes you feel good. According to that, if it makes you feel good to kill your father and mother, it is perfectly all right.

God gave the Ten Commandments to control the old nature. But they didn't control the old nature because the nation to whom God gave them departed from Him. They went far from God.

Nevertheless, man was not able to measure up to it -- Paul repeatedly states this in his epistles.

Now how is man to live? He is not to live by his own effort because he can't make it. The Word says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-control]: against such there is no law" ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)). There is no law which can produce these things. It is not naturally in you or me to love -- I am not referring to sexual love but to a real concern for others and a real love for God. That kind of love does not come naturally. There used to be a popular song entitled "Doing What Comes Naturally." Well, when man does what comes naturally, he produces our contemporary civilization which is as lawless and as violent as it can be. There is a question in the minds of many serious men in high places concerning whether or not our nation can survive. We cannot, my friend, apart from a restoration of control upon the old nature of man.

How can you produce these wonderful fruits of love, gentleness, meekness, etc.? Well, you cannot produce them by your own effort. Go back to the Sermon on the Mount where it says, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" ([Matt. 5:5](#)). Talk to the Communists about that. Are they inheriting the world by being meek? Ask the people of Afghanistan if the Russian invaders came with meekness. And I received a letter from a missionary in Ethiopia which reveals that the meek are not inheriting the earth. Well, the meek are going to inherit the earth -- but not until the King comes, the One who was the meekest Man who ever walked this earth. He is going to come in great power and glory, and He is going to put down unrighteousness upon this earth and establish His Kingdom. When He does that, the Sermon on the Mount will be the law of the Kingdom. But today, how are we to live? By the power of the Spirit; He is the One who produces these wonderful fruits in our lives: love, joy, peace. How about peace in your own heart? Do you have peace with God? Only the Spirit of God can give that to you. And joy -- my friend, do you know what it is to have that real joy of the Lord? Then how about this business of meekness? You and I cannot be meek. We have a proud heart. I've got one --

I enjoy having folk pat me on the back. Now don't tell me that you don't like it, because you like it too. We are proud. That is the old nature manifesting itself. But the fruit of the Spirit is meekness. All through my ministry I have asked God to make me a meek man -- "Oh, God, make me a meek man. Give me humility. Make me the kind of Christian that I ought to be!" I can't do it for myself. God wants to do it for us by the Holy Spirit.

My friend, this is a new way of living. This is not the Mosaic system, this is not the Sermon on the Mount, this is new! God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies -- it is spiritual blessings that He has given to us. And now we are to walk through this world in meekness, lowliness of mind and heart, by the power of the Spirit of God.

And today we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit which will enable us to live for God. It will produce fruit in our lives. It will enable us to serve God. This is the high plane to which we are called.

It is my hope that you now see the Sermon on the Mount in its true perspective.

Now we are ready to come down from the mount where He enunciated the ethic, and we will see that He also has the dynamic to enforce this law when He comes to rule upon this earth.

Chapter 8

THEME: Jesus demonstrates that He has the dynamic to enforce the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount

Introduction (8:1)

The previous chapter concluded the Sermon on the Mount. It has been conceded by friend and foe alike that there has been given no higher ethic than that in the Sermon on the Mount.

Now the question arises: How can one attain to that high ethic? To answer this question, Matthew brings together a series of miracles which demonstrate that the One who gave the ethic also has the dynamic for its accomplishment. Our Lord made it very clear to us who are believers that ". . . without me ye can do nothing" ([John 15:5](#)). I wish that we could keep that fact before us at all times. You and I, in and of ourselves, are unable to produce anything which is acceptable to God. Christ today works through the Holy Spirit, whom He sent into the world, to accomplish through us what we cannot do.

This reveals an important point: Matthew is not attempting to give us a biography of the Lord Jesus, nor is he attempting to put in chronological order the series of events that took place in His ministry. Rather, he is giving us a movement, which we must not miss. The King went to the mountain, enunciated His manifesto, the law of the Kingdom; now He comes down from the mount, and we see twelve miracles that He performs. This demonstrates that when He rules on this earth, He will have the dynamic to enforce the laws of His Kingdom.

As I have suggested previously, the Sermon on the Mount is probably in an abridged edition. In the Millennium we will have the unabridged, which means that there will be many more things to be carried out.

In chapters 8 and 9 Matthew tells us of twelve miracles. While he does not attempt to give all the miracles that demonstrate the King's power, he gives these in an organized, logical order. Let me call your attention to this in the six miracles recorded in the chapter before us:

1. Healing the leper, our Lord touches him. This is human disease at its worst.
2. Healing the centurion's servant is done from a distance -- He has no physical contact with him.
3. Healing Peter's wife's mother, He touches her.
4. Casting out demons, He moves into the supernatural realm of spirits.
5. Stilling the winds and the sea is in the realm of nature and demonstrates His power over natural forces.
6. Casting out demons from the two Gergesenes is a very difficult case in the realm of the spirit world.

The King moves in all of these different areas, and Matthew lists them not in a chronological order but in a logical order. There is a definite movement in Matthew's record.

Now let us turn to the text.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him [[Matt. 8:1](#)].

Notice that "great multitudes followed him." There were not just a few folk. You see, He was up in Capernaum, where his headquarters were. And I am confident that the following miracle occurred there. Of course, this raises the question of where He had been when He gave the Sermon on the Mount. I have read many different theories, but I do not think the location is important for us to know. We are told that when He came down from the mountain, great crowds followed Him. Is the King who is able to enunciate the ethic also able to move with power among humanity? That is an important question.

When I was in college, I had a roommate who had gone through a rough year. He was attractive and popular and had fallen in with the wrong crowd. Finally, drinking forced him to quit his ministry. At graduation our speaker carried us into the clouds, telling us what we ought to do, which is what most graduation speakers do. Later, in our room, this fellow dropped down on his bed, dejected, and said, "Mac, I don't need anyone to tell me what to do. I need someone to tell me how to do it." That, my friend, is what all of us need, isn't it? Now the King has enunciated the ethic; does He have power?

Jesus Heals A Leper (8:2-4)

And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean [[Matt. 8:2](#)].

Notice that Jesus came from the heights to the very depths. Leprosy, symbolic of sin in the Bible, was considered incurable; leprosy was the most loathsome disease. And when this leper came to Jesus, he did not ask, "Will You make me clean?" or "Are You able to make me clean?" This leper had faith. He recognized the lordship of Christ, and on that basis said, "If You will, You can make me clean." What we ask is not always the Lord's will, friend. But if it is His will, He can do it. It is most important that the will of God comes first. It may be easy for you, but it is difficult for me to put the will of God first. I put it like this, "Lord, will You do this because I want You to do it?" But the leper says, "I know You can, but will You?" That is, is it according to Your will?

this, "Lord, will You do this because I want You to do it?" But the leper says, "I know You can, but will You?" That is, is it according to Your will?

This is a little different from what we hear folk pray today when they demand that the Lord do certain things. May I say to you, friend, let Him decide -- and that's the way it is going to be done anyway.

And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed [[Matt. 8:3](#)].

"Jesus put forth his hand and touched him." If I had touched a leper, what would have happened? Well, I might have contracted his disease, and I would not have healed him. But notice what happens. First of all, He did touch him.

Have you ever stopped to think that this man not only had the physical disease of leprosy but that he had a psychological hang-up that was terrible? I do not know this man's background, but I imagine that one day he noticed a breaking out on his hand. Perhaps he had been out plowing, came in, showed his wife, and she put some ointment on it. The next morning it was just as red as it could be, and he went out and plowed again. This went on for about a week, and his wife started getting uneasy. She suggested he visit the priest. He went to the priest who isolated him for fourteen days. At the end of this period of time the disease had spread. The priest told him he had leprosy.

The man asked the priest if he could go and tell his wife and children and say good-bye. The priest said, "I'm sorry, you cannot tell them good-bye. You cannot put your arm around your wife again or hold your children in your arms anymore. When anyone comes near you, you must cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' " He saw his children grow up from a distance. They would leave food in a certain place, and he would come and get it after they withdrew. He could not touch them. In fact, he had been able to touch no one, and no one had been able to touch him. Then one day he came to Jesus and said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." And what did the Lord Jesus do? He touched him. May I say to you that the touch of Jesus was one of the most wonderful things that ever had happened to the man. It not only cleansed his leprosy, but it brought him back into the family of mankind and into the family of God. "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them [[Matt. 8:4](#)].

In Mark's record we find that this man was so overjoyed -- and you can't blame him -- that he went out and told everybody he met. He "blazed it abroad!" Consequently, the crowds pushed in on our Lord, and He was forced to retire from the city and stay in desert places.

Jesus Heals The Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

Jesus now enters into the city of Capernaum.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him [[Matt. 8:5](#)].

I'm sure the centurion had heard about the leper's healing. The centurion was a Gentile, a captain of sixty centuries (companies of one hundred men) in the Roman legion. Luke's record tells us that he had built a synagogue for the Jews. I have been in the ruins of that old synagogue. (If there is any place in existence where Jesus actually walked, it would be in that old synagogue.) Now hear the centurion's request --

And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented [[Matt. 8:6](#)].

This servant was in a very serious condition.

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it [[Matt. 8:7-9](#)].

The centurion was in a position in which he recognized authority. He wore a Roman uniform and could say to a soldier under him, "Do this," and he did it. Why? Because of power, which is authority. He looked at Jesus and said, "You have that kind of power." He recognized that Jesus had that kind of authority over physical illness.

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel [[Matt. 8:10](#)].

It is recorded that on two occasions the Lord Jesus Christ marveled. One was at the unbelief of Israel, and the other was at the faith of this gentile centurion.

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 8:11](#)].

It is interesting that He said that many should come from the "east and the west." At the time our Lord said this, my ancestors (and perhaps yours also) were in the west. Or

perhaps your ancestors were in the east. Our Lord said that this message was going to get out to them also so that they could trust Him and could "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." What a tremendous statement!

Of course, each individual has to exercise personal faith in Christ. No individual can claim church membership, or family tradition, or the fact that his parents are Christian, for his own salvation.

And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour [[Matt. 8:13](#)].

Although the afflicted servant was not in the presence of Jesus, the centurion's faith in Jesus Christ caused him to be healed. Jesus touched a leper, and he was healed. Now He heals the centurion's servant from a distance.

Jesus Heals Peter's Wife's Mother And Others (8:14-18)

Next we come to the third miracle of healing.

And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them [[Matt. 8:14-15](#)].

Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. He touched her and healed her. Notice these three types of diseases. One disease is leprosy, which is incurable. Another affliction is palsy, a paralysis. The other illness is a fever, possibly caused by a temporary illness.

The fourth miracle occurred in the evening.

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick [[Matt. 8:16](#)].

The word translated "devils" should be demons. There are many demons, but there is only one Devil.

Let me call to your attention the fact that they brought "many" to Him. No isolated cases are given. Again I say that if you watch this Gospel record carefully, you will see that Matthew makes it clear that there were literally thousands of people healed in that day. For instance there were thousands of blind men who could now see. There were thousands of crippled folk who were walking around normally. There were thousands of deaf folk who could now hear. This is the reason that the enemies of Jesus never questioned whether or not He had performed miracles. Instead, they asked how He had done them.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses [[Matt. 8:17](#)].

This quotation is from [Isaiah 53:4](#). Probably this verse is used by so-called faith healers more than any other verse. They claim that physical healing is in the Atonement, and they use this verse to support their position.

Let's turn the pages back to Isaiah and look at this verse, because I do not believe it gives sanction to the modern healing movement at all. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" ([Isa. 53:4-5](#)). Of what are we healed? This passage from Isaiah clearly states that we are healed of our transgressions and iniquities. You say to me, "Are you sure about that?" I know this is what these verses are talking about because Peter says: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" ([1Pet. 2:24](#)). Healed of what? "Sins." Peter is making it very clear that he is talking about sin.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" ([Isa. 53:6](#)). It was your iniquity and mine which was laid upon Him. Obviously, Isaiah is referring to the fact that Christ would grapple with the great fundamental problem of sin. To contend that healing is in the Atonement is beside the point. So is a glorified body in the Atonement, but I don't have mine yet. Do you? Also, a new earth with the curse removed is in the Atonement of Christ, but it is obvious that we do not have these yet. In this day when sin and Satan still hold sway, there is no release from sickness as an imperative of the Atonement. Why did Paul urge Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach? Why didn't he urge him to get his healing in the Atonement? Why didn't James urge the saints to claim the Atonement when he asked them to call in the elders to pray? (see [James 5:13-15](#)). Why didn't Paul claim healing in the Atonement when he mentioned the fact that there was given to him a thorn in the flesh?

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" ([2Cor. 12:7-9](#), italics mine).

There are other examples recorded concerning this subject. Paul, in Philippians, had a regular hospital on his hands. Epaphroditus had been ill (see [Phil. 2:25-27](#)), and Paul did not use the Atonement to claim healing.

My friend, we need to face the fact that it is not always God's will to heal. However, sometimes it is God's will to heal. Instead of going to a tent or an auditorium where healing services are advertised, why don't you go directly to the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ? Find out if the healing is in His will for you. I believe in divine healing but not in so-called divine healers. Instead of going to an individual down here on earth who claims to have power, I prefer to take my case to the Great Physician and say

with the leper, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" ([v. 2](#)). Then whether we are healed or not healed, He gets the glory. And we want Him to have that.

Apparently, Paul knew nothing of this modern cultism of seeking healing in the Atonement. God can and does heal today, but not through so-called faith healers.

Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side [[Matt. 8:18](#)].

Notice the great multitudes of people about Him. Literally, He had healed thousands of afflicted people, and not just those individual cases recorded. John substantiated this fact in his Gospel of John when he wrote: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" ([John 20:30-31](#)).

Two Ask Permission To Follow Jesus (8:19-22)

Just as Jesus was getting ready to cross to the other side, a man approached Him.

And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest [[Matt. 8:19](#)].

This scribe was probably a young man, because an older man most likely would not have acted in this manner. This scribe was in the crowd, toying with the decision to follow Him or not to follow Him. He did not know what to do. Then he saw Jesus preparing to go to the other side. The Lord and His disciples were moving toward the boat, and he had to make up his mind quickly. So he came out from the crowd, apparently fell down before the Lord and said, "I'll follow You wherever You go." The scribe had made his decision. The Lord looked at him and said frankly and candidly:

And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head [[Matt. 8:20](#)].

In effect, the Lord Jesus was saying to this young man, "Have you counted the cost?" Our Lord was revealing His poverty when He was here upon this earth. The young man had opened his heart; so our Lord opens His heart. I imagine that He said something like this: It will cost you something to follow Me. When we go to a place, there are no reservations made for us at a Hilton Hotel or a Holiday Inn -- we just don't have a place to stay. The birds of the air have nests, and the foxes have holes in the rocks where they can go, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head. The poverty of the Lord Jesus! Poverty is part of the curse that He bore.

We are not told that this young man followed Christ. I have always felt that he did. I think that when the boat pulled out, there was a young man in it who had made a decision for Him.

And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father [[Matt. 8:21](#)].

Here is a young man who has made a decision to follow the Lord but wants to bury his father first. This incident has been greatly misunderstood. We get the impression that the old gentleman had just died and that the family was getting ready to hold the funeral service. Our Lord seems very harsh when He replies.

But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead [[Matt. 8:22](#)].

What does the Lord mean by this? How could the dead bury the dead?

Dr. Adam Smith, who was quite an authority on the Middle East, has written several helpful books. He tells of one incident where he wanted to hire an Arab guide. He explained where he wished to go and was told of a young man in a certain village who would be an excellent guide. Dr. Smith went to the village and asked the young man to be his guide and was told, "I first have to bury my father." And there, in front of his hut, sat the old gentleman as hale and hardy as you please. What the young Arab really meant was that he could not leave because he would have to care for his father until he died. The father was the son's responsibility.

The Lord Jesus told the young man who had come to Him to let someone else take care of his father or let the father take care of himself.

Does He impress you as being unfeeling when He said this? I don't think He was. It is my conviction that our Lord was bringing this young man to make a decision. Was he going to put Christ first? When the young man made that decision, the Lord Jesus probably said to him, "Then you go back home and take care of your father."

Many years ago there was a young lady whose father was a demanding old man. She became a missionary, went to a field of service, and did a good work. When she came home after many years, she found her father absolutely helpless. There was no one else to care for him, and he accused her of deserting him and of not being a Christian. Her father had never made a decision for Christ; so she stayed home and made him comfortable and gave him companionship.

The old man was really shaken by it, and during that time he made a decision for Christ. I am confident that the Lord Jesus was leading her in all of that, but there was a day at the beginning when she had to decide whether she would go as a missionary and put Christ first.

That probably was the case of the young man whom Matthew tells us about here.

Jesus Stills The Tempest On The Sea Of Galilee (8:23-27)

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him [[Matt. 8:23](#)].

We have now come to the fifth miracle. It has nothing to do with healing a body but concerns a physical miracle over nature. Here the power of the Lord Jesus is demonstrated, and I believe that Adam had that same power before he lost his dominion. Now we see in the Lord Jesus, the last Adam, the manifestation of this dominion.

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep [[Matt. 8:24](#)].

This was no ordinary storm. We saw in the account of the temptation of Jesus that the Devil left Him for a little season -- but not for long. I think this storm was actually satanic in its origin. This was an attempt of Satan to destroy the Lord.

Notice that our Lord was asleep. This is one of the most human scenes Matthew gives us. Jesus was so weary that even in a storm He could sleep! It reveals something else: He could sleep in a storm whereas I cannot. I'm a little nervous during storms, and so were the disciples --

And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish [[Matt. 8:25](#)].

What little faith they had! Notice how He handled the situation --

And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm [[Matt. 8:26](#)].

He rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith, then He rebuked the winds and the sea. The word Luke uses for "rebuke" is muzzle. He controlled the waves like we would put a muzzle on a dog. And the waves just smoothed out!

Although it is true that these men exhibited very little faith at this time, there came a day when the storms of persecution broke over the bark of their little lives, and I can't find a record of any one of them crying out, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Rather, we read in [Acts 4:29](#) that they said, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." That was the important thing to them. Oh, how we need that kind of courage and conviction in this day in which we live!

Note the profound impression made on His disciples by the miracle of stilling the storm.

But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! [[Matt. 8:27](#)].

The One who could give the ethic is the One who can also demonstrate the dynamic.

Jesus Casts The Demons Out Of Two Gergesenes (8:28-34)

The sixth miracle is a tremendous one. We will not go into detail, but it has to do with the casting out of demons.

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way [[Matt. 8:28](#)].

Here Jesus is in Gadara, as it is called today. The people living here were from the tribe of Gad. In the Old Testament, when the land was being divided up among the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Gad stayed on the wrong side of the Jordan River. What happened to

them? They went into the pig business, which, as Jews, they should not have done. Once you disobey the Lord, the next step of disobedience is not so difficult. Before long you are walking out of His way and His will altogether.

When Jesus entered into this country, He was met by two men possessed with devils. "Devils" is an unfortunate translation. The word properly and literally is demons. These were dangerous men, demon-possessed men.

And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? [[Matt. 8:29](#)].

This miracle opens up a tremendous area that, unfortunately, we know so little about today. It is difficult for us to understand the import of this miracle because of our lack of understanding of demons. Personally, I believe the miracles involving demons are the greatest He performed.

And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine [[Matt. 8:30-31](#)].

For some reason demons want to be brought into physical reality. They seem to be concerned about being materialized. They were even satisfied to indwell a herd of swine.

And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters [[Matt. 8:32](#)].

The herd of swine, however, would rather die than to have the demons possess them. Mankind is a little different. Many people are demon-possessed today. We had a real manifestation of the supernatural during the time of Moses, during the time of Elijah, and during the time of the Lord Jesus. Today we seem to be moving into an orbit where we are seeing more and more manifestations of that which is demonic. There are many evidences of it all about us. Many instances are difficult to pinpoint, and there is always a danger of going overboard and saying, "I believe So-and-So is demon-possessed." We need to be wary of doing this because it is sort of like witch-hunting. Nevertheless, there are many demon-possessed people today.

When I was in college, I attempted one time to major in abnormal psychology. I knew a man who worked with abnormal people. He was a medical doctor and a Christian, and he told me that he was fairly sure that many of his cases were actually in the realm of the supernatural, cases of demon-possession.

It is interesting to note that the demons did not want to be confined. They knew something of the confinement of certain other demons, the fallen angels, as they are called in the Epistle of Jude. These demons wanted to materialize themselves in this world.

And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts [[Matt. 8:33-34](#)].

This is certainly ironical, is it not? These people would rather have their pigs than Jesus. Believe me, this is not peculiar to the Gadarenes. There are a great many people today who prefer their "pigs" to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 9

THEME: Jesus performs six more miracles; calls Matthew; contends with the Pharisees; continues His ministry in Galilee

In the previous chapter we have seen six miracles which demonstrate that the King has the dynamic, the power, to enforce the ethic He has pronounced, and the chapter before us continues the same thought. We see Him performing physical miracles of healing, one that I classify as supernatural (the raising of the dead) and the spiritual miracle of casting out a demon.

Jesus Returns To Capernaum (9:1-7)

And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city [[Matt. 9:1](#)].

Jesus left the country of the Gadarenes, who did not want Him, and returned to Capernaum.

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee [[Matt. 9:2](#)].

We are given details in Mark's account concerning this event. Mark tells us how this man was let down through the roof of a house, and the Lord both healed him and forgave him his sins. Healing and the forgiveness of sins are related.

And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth [[Matt. 9:3](#)].

The scribes were of the opinion that the Lord could not enable this sick man to walk. The Lord, knowing the thought of their minds and the evil in their hearts, asked them --

For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? [[Matt. 9:5](#)].

They wouldn't answer His question, but if they had answered, they would have had to say, "Well, for us, one is as great as the other."

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

And he arose, and departed to his house [[Matt. 9:6-7](#)].

When this palsied man got up and walked, it meant that the One who could make him walk was the One who could forgive his sins.

My friend, you and I cannot forgive sins -- only the Lord Jesus can do that. And since we cannot forgive sins, we cannot make a man walk. Satan is a deceiver, and we need to investigate the so-called healings we hear about today. Let's don't get in the way of what God does, and let's make sure that He receives the glory.

Jesus Calls Matthew (9:9-13)

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him [[Matt. 9:9](#)].

Matthew modestly passes over his call with only this verse. Luke tells us that Matthew made a great dinner in honor of Jesus (see [Luke 5:27-29](#)). Evidently the incident which follows took place at this dinner. Matthew invited many of his publican friends to this dinner because he wanted them to know the Lord Jesus Christ also.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? [[Matt. 9:10-11](#)].

The Pharisees did not believe in eating with publicans and sinners. Many saints today still have the same idea. It doesn't hurt to invite sinners to dinner because they are the ones who need to be reached for Christ. We need to have some contact with sinners.

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick [[Matt. 9:12](#)].

Jesus is the Great Physician. He has come to heal mankind of their basic problem, which is sin. This ought to be said to a lot of our little Christian groups who have their banquets and "fellowship" meetings and do not invite the unsaved. If the unsaved do come, the majority of the Christians freeze them out anyway. May I say to you that I think some of these so-called Christian groups are sinful in their very existence and in the way they meet today.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance [[Matt. 9:13](#)].

Matthew is at it again, quoting [Hosea 6:6](#) from the Old Testament.

When Jesus said, "For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," He could have included the Pharisees because they were sinners. In fact, all of us are included -- "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#), italics mine).

Parable Of Old Garment And Old Bottles (9:14-17)

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? [[Matt. 9:14](#)].

The disciples of John had been observing the Lord Jesus. After all, some of these men were originally disciples of John -- we know that Andrew and Philip were. They had come and were following the Lord Jesus, and the other disciples of John said, "Look, here is something happening which is a little different from the way we do it, and we wonder why."

John, as has been indicated previously, was an Old Testament prophet. He walked out of the Old Testament into the New Testament to make the announcement that the Messiah had come. Malachi had predicted that a messenger would come to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. John said, "All I'm doing is getting the highway ready for the Lord. He will be here in a few minutes." And He did come as John had said.

Now our Lord is going to enunciate a great principle and reveal the fact that the dispensation is going to be changed.

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast [[Matt. 9:15](#)].

Although for believers today fasting has real value, we have been given no commandment to fast. Fasting should be done with the idea that we are prostrating ourselves before God because we are in need of His mercy and of His help. This is the thought behind fasting.

Now listen to the Lord as He explains the change of dispensations from the Old Testament of law to the New Testament of grace.

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved [[Matt. 9:16-17](#)].

Our Lord is saying this: The old covenant, the old dispensation of law, was ending, and He had not come to project it or to continue under that dispensation. Actually, He had come to provide a new garment, and that new garment was the robe of righteousness which He gives to those who do nothing more than to trust Him.

The "bottles" were the wineskins of that day. They were fashioned of animal skin. You can see that when new wine would be put into a new wineskin, it would expand. But an old wineskin had reached the place of maximum expansion; when it was filled with new wine, it would naturally burst open and the wine would be lost.

Our Lord is saying this, "I haven't come to sew patches on an old garment. I have come to present a new garment, something which is altogether new." This was very radical. John summed it up in his Gospel when he said, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" ([John 1:17](#)).

Jesus Heals A Woman And Raises A Child From The Dead (9:18-26)

We come to the eighth and ninth miracles which, in a manner of speaking, are linked together. Both are miracles of healing, and it is a tremendous scene.

While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live [[Matt. 9:18](#)].

Luke in his Gospel tells us that when this ruler first came to Jesus it was to ask Him to heal his daughter: "And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying . . ." ([Luke 8:41-42](#)). The little girl was sick unto death, and while her father waited to talk with Jesus, a servant came and told him that the little girl had died.

And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples [[Matt. 9:19](#)].

As Jesus and His disciples arose to follow Jairus to his home, a large crowd gathered around Him.

And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment [[Matt. 9:20](#)].

You cannot help but notice how striking this passage is. The little girl was twelve years old, and this woman had suffered with this issue of blood for twelve years. Here were twelve years of light going out of this child's life, and twelve years of darkness were coming to an end and light was breaking into this woman's life. Here is the contrast of light and darkness.

In the previous verse note what the woman did -- Jesus did not touch her, as He did in many other miracles, but she touched Him. It was not the method, however, that brought about her healing; it was her faith.

For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour [[Matt. 9:21-22](#)].

Dr. Luke gives us much more detail about this miracle, recording our Lord's reaction to this woman's touch and her response. Jesus then moves from this woman and continues toward the house of Jairus.

And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn [[Matt. 9:23-24](#)].

When Jesus arrived at the home, people were already mourning for the child. He told them the little girl was only sleeping and not dead, and they laughed at Him. None in the house believed Jesus could raise the dead, but He kept moving toward the child.

But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose [[Matt. 9:25](#)].

This is the first instance of raising the dead that we have in the Gospels. Three notable incidents of raising the dead are recorded. Again, Luke goes into more detail than Matthew. Luke adds that He spoke to the little girl in this lovely fashion, "Little lamb, wake up, I say." The method of Jesus in raising the dead was always the same. He spoke to the person directly.

After healing the woman with the issue of blood and raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, the fame of Jesus spread.

And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land [[Matt. 9:26](#)].

Jesus Opens The Eyes Of Two Blind Men (9:27-31)

The tenth miracle concerns two blind men who followed the Lord Jesus --

And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us [[Matt. 9:27](#)].

Note that the two blind men addressed Him as the "Son of David." This is significant in this Gospel which presents Him as King.

And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it [[Matt. 9:28-30](#)].

This is another remarkable case where the Lord charges these men not to tell anyone about what happened to them. He said the same thing to the leper. There are several reasons for the Lord to ask this favor, but one is made clear in this passage. The publication of His miracles caused the crowds to press in upon Him and actually hindered Him at His work.

But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country [[Matt. 9:31](#)].

These two men whose sight was restored just couldn't contain their joy -- "they . . . spread abroad his fame."

Jesus Heals A Man Dumb And Demon-possessed (9:32-38)

We now come to the eleventh miracle. Another demon-possessed man is healed. This is the third incident of demon possession recorded in chapters 8 -- 9 of Matthew.

As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel [[Matt. 9:32-33](#)].

Notice the reaction of the Pharisees --

But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils [[Matt. 9:34](#)].

They did not deny that He had caused the dumb to speak and the blind to see and the crippled to walk. What they accused Him of was that He did these things by the power of Satan.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people [[Matt. 9:35](#)].

"The gospel of the kingdom" is not the gospel of the grace of God. This does not mean to imply that there are two gospels. There is only one gospel, but there are many facets of it. The gospel of the Kingdom was the announcement that the Kingdom of the heavens was at hand. It meant to get ready for the King. It required a heart condition that would accept and follow the King who was then going to the cross.

"And healing every sickness and every disease among the people." We see again and again that Matthew inserts this information that there were thousands of folk who were healed in that day. This is the reason the enemy never questioned the fact that He performed miracles -- it was too obvious.

Again let me say that in our day a great many people get excited about the claim of certain ones to have a gift of healing. Personally, I do not think that anyone in our day has that gift. As I mentioned previously, for many years I have offered one hundred dollars to anyone who would come forward and be able to prove that he had been healed by a so-called faith healer. You would think that out of literally hundreds of reported faith healings during the time of a sensational healing meeting, there would be one case that is genuine. I'll be honest with you -- I did expect someone to come along that had had a psychological cure. No one has come.

I asked the leader of a certain denomination who has offered one thousand dollars to anyone who could prove he had been cured by a faith healer what his experience had been. He told me about several lawsuits that had been filed against him by those who had

tried to collect the money. No one, however, had ever been able to go into court and prove that he had been healed by a faith healer.

In contrast to this, there were thousands of folk who had been healed by our Lord when He was here. And I would think that there would be at least one today, wouldn't you think so? Let me ask you the question: Do you really know someone who has been healed by a man or woman? The point is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Great Physician, and I believe -- I know -- that He can heal today as well as yesterday. I have great confidence in Him. Now let me make myself clear: We should seek the best medical help available to us, but we need to recognize that doctors are very limited. However, the Lord Jesus is not limited. We can be confident that He will deal with us according to His perfect will, and we need to give Him the credit for whatever happens.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd [[Matt. 9:36](#)].

The note of compassion which concludes this chapter is startling, isn't it?

God's ideal kings and rulers have been shepherds. Both Moses and David were shepherds before they led God's people. When we pray for the Lord to thrust forth laborers into His harvest, pray that He will give them the heart of a shepherd. Pray that the Lord will give you a heart of compassion for the lost.

Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest [[Matt. 9:37-38](#)].

Having said this to His disciples, He now sends them forth. My friend, when you pray for something, it is always well to be willing to do it yourself. When our Lord asked the disciples to pray for laborers, He sent into the harvest these very men whom He asked to pray about it. This is very interesting indeed. An old bishop in the Methodist church in Georgia years ago said, "When a man prays for a corn crop, the Lord expects him to say 'Amen' with a hoe." I have always believed that you should not pray about anything unless you are also willing to do it yourself.

Chapter 10

THEME: Jesus commissions the twelve apostles to go to the nation Israel and preach the gospel of the Kingdom

This chapter continues the movement we have seen in the Gospel of Matthew. The Lord Jesus, having given the ethic, came down from the mountain, demonstrated His power in the twelve miracles which have been enumerated. Now He commissions the twelve apostles to go to the nation Israel and preach the gospel of the Kingdom.

These men are to go, not as forerunners but as after-runners. Our Lord gave them power to perform miracles -- this was their credential. (Have you ever noticed that John the

Baptist never performed a miracle?) Note that their title is changed from disciple (learner) to apostle (delegate).

As we enter this chapter, keep in mind the number of cults which come to this chapter for their authority for some peculiar ministry or conduct. You see, the instructions for the Christian are not found in this chapter. We need to consider the instruction here in light of the circumstances and conditions under which they were given, and we should be able to interpret them accurately.

The Twelve Commissioned And Named (10:1-4)

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease [[Matt. 10:1](#)].

The power He gave to them was their credential as they went to the nation Israel. The prophets of the Old Testament had said that this would be the credentials of the Messiah. Having given them this power, they are no longer disciples but apostles.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him [[Matt. 10:2-4](#)].

The Method And Message Of The Twelve (10:5-15)

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the city of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [[Matt. 10:5-6](#)].

Now if you are going to take your instructions from this chapter for your personal ministry, you will have to limit yourself to the nation Israel, because this is to be given to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Obviously, these verses do not contain our commission. Contrast it with our commission in [Acts 1:8](#): ". . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Notice that we are to include Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, while Jesus instructed the twelve in this chapter to stay out of Samaria and not to go into the way of the Gentiles but only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

And the message of the twelve was to be this:

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand [[Matt. 10:7](#)].

How could it be "at hand"? It was at hand in the person of the King -- He was in their midst.

At the turn of the century and at the conclusion of the Victorian era, there was a feeling of optimism throughout the so-called Christian world. All of the major denominations at that time took on the herculean task of "building the Kingdom of Heaven" here on this earth. Each group thought that they had a contract from God to accomplish this purpose. Of course, the church was never called to build the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will establish the Kingdom when He returns to the earth. The church is a called-out body from the world to manifest Christ and to preach His gospel throughout the world. Kingdom business is none of our business.

The Kingdom of Heaven is within us when we receive Christ.

Now notice that our Lord sends out the twelve with the same credentials that He Himself has --

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:
freely ye have received, freely give [[Matt. 10:8](#)].

Now I insist that if you are going to do one of the above things, you ought to be able to do all four of them. Note that raising the dead is included! Obviously, this was applicable to the time and circumstances under which it was given.

It is interesting to note that folk in our day who use [verse 8](#) as their commission ignore the next verse -- at least, I have never heard them use it -- yet it all goes together in one package.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses [[Matt. 10:9](#)].

Some time ago I suggested to a so-called faith healer that he go to the hospitals where they really needed him. But it is interesting to see that these folk have to be in a place where an offering can be taken.

Obviously, we need to place this verse in its correct context. These were temporary instructions during our Lord's three-year ministry. There came a day at the end of His ministry when He gave different instructions to His apostles: "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" ([Luke 22:35-36](#)).

And the apostle Paul wrote, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" ([1Cor. 9:14](#)), and he deals at length with the matter of the preacher in [1Corinthians 9](#). In our day, certainly God expects us to support Christian ministries.

My only suggestion is that if you are going to appropriate to yourself [Matthew 10:8](#), be sure to take the next verse that goes along with it. I don't mean to be harsh, but it is important to interpret a verse in its context.

Now notice the further instructions our Lord gave to the twelve before He sent them out at this time --

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence [[Matt. 10:11](#)].

This certainly is not for our day. The best place for a visiting speaker to go is to a motel or hotel instead of causing an extra burden on folk when they are so busy. Some people still have a "prophet's chamber," and I know where many of them are in this country; they are delightful places. But in our day, I don't think our Lord would have us go into a town and ask, "Who is worthy in this town; who is your outstanding Christian?" then go and knock on his door and say, "Look, I'm here." Again let's note that the Lord Jesus is giving His men temporary instructions under local circumstances for a three-year period. Let's interpret it in its correct context.

And when ye come into an house, salute it.

And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you [[Matt. 10:12-13](#)].

The word house refers, of course, not to the building but to the people who live in it, the household.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet [[Matt. 10:14](#)].

This is not our commission today. This is not the attitude of modern missionaries. Certainly, when I have gone to other places to hold meetings, I have never gone outside the towns and shaken the dust off my feet. I won't say that I haven't felt like it in some places, but I have never done it. I feel that this instruction was given to these men for that particular time.

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city [[Matt. 10:15](#)].

In the next chapter of Matthew we will find out what happened to some of these cities that fell under judgment.

What The Twelve Must Expect (10:16-23)

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as servants, and harmless as doves [[Matt. 10:16](#)].

Having spoken about the local situation, the Lord now gives these men certain great principles by which they are to go as His witnesses. These principles are good for time and eternity, and they certainly are good for our day. The child of God should be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. It is dangerous to be one and not the other. I have met some who are wise as serpents -- they are clever -- but they are not helpless as doves. To use a common expression, they will take you. I know others who are quite gullible; they

are harmless as doves, but they are not wise as serpents. A serpent is dangerous, and a dove is in danger, so that we need to combine both qualities.

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues [[Matt. 10:17](#)].

I have never been scourged in a synagogue, but I have been verbally scourged in some of our good churches.

And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles [[Matt. 10:18](#)].

In that day this certainly happened to those who were His. Also, it has happened subsequently to many in the church.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you [[Matt. 10:19-20](#)].

I believe these verses apply to those men who had no opportunity to prepare answers when they were arrested for doing the job Jesus sent them to do. These men sent out by the Lord made no preparation, and if we place these verses in the local situation, we will have no problem with them at all.

Unfortunately, there are many folk who apply these verses to themselves and make no preparation for their sermons! When I was in seminary, a fellow student, who was a little odd in more ways than one, believed that he should preach without any preparation. A friend and I decided one night that we would go and hear him preach. Well, it was painfully obvious that he had not prepared his message. On the way back to the seminary, my friend, who had even more nerve than I had, asked him, "Did you prepare that message tonight?"

"Of course, I didn't!"

"Well, how did you get it?"

"The Spirit of God gave it to me."

My friend said to him, "I don't think you ought to blame that message on the Holy Spirit!"

Another friend of mine was at Temple, Texas, years ago when the trains were running through there, and he had to change trains there on a Sunday morning. As he waited for his connection, he was walking up and down with his notes in his hand because he was to preach that morning. He was wearing a long frock coat, and another man approached him who also was wearing a frock coat. The man asked him, "Are you a preacher?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing there?"

"I'm going over my notes for my sermon this morning."

"Do you mean to tell me that you prepare your sermons?"

"Yes, don't you?"

"No. I just get up and let the Holy Spirit speak through me."

"Well, suppose when you get up, the Holy Spirit doesn't give you the message immediately. Then what do you do?"

"Oh," he said. "I just mess around until He does!"

Unfortunately, there are a whole lot of preachers just messing around in our day and using as their excuse this instruction which our Lord gave to His apostles. That is really a misinterpretation of Scripture. If we put these verses back in their context and see them in their local situation, their meaning is crystal clear.

Jesus continues:

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death [[Matt. 10:21](#)].

The coming of Christ into the world divided man; it did not bring unity. When one person in a family accepts Christ and another family member does not, you have a division. Paul said it well in [1Corinthians 1:18](#), "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved [[Matt. 10:22](#)].

This refers to the fact that the Lord will be able to keep His own for the three-year period of His ministry. Similarly, [Matthew 24:13](#) means that the Lord will be able to keep His own during the Great Tribulation period, as we shall see when we come to chapter 24.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come [[Matt. 10:23](#)].

Notice that He says, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel" -- not the world, but Israel -- "till the Son of man be come," meaning until He is manifested before the nation. It is difficult for us to conceive of the fact that our Lord covered the nation of Israel. And there was a real division in the nation concerning Him. When He asked His disciples, ". . . Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" ([Matt. 16:13](#)), they gave Him several answers. Everybody had his own opinion about Him. In our day He is still the most controversial Person who has ever been in the world.

Principles That Are To Govern The Lives Of All Disciples (10:24-42)

Now the Lord Jesus gives His men general instructions. Again, these are great principles which you and I can certainly apply to ourselves, although the direct interpretation is to the twelve apostles.

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord [[Matt. 10:24](#)].

We need to keep in mind that we are representing the Lord Jesus Christ, and He must come first. If we do not put Him first, we will have trouble -- I mean trouble with Him!

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? [[Matt. 10:25](#)].

Don't worry about what people say about you if you are being faithful to Him. They did not say nice things about the Lord. If Jesus Himself received ill-treatment, His disciples could hardly expect to fare better.

Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known [[Matt. 10:26](#)].

Friend, your life is going to be turned wrong side out someday and so is mine. God's ultimate judgment will someday vindicate believers and deal with persecutors; so you had better have the inside of your life looking as attractive as the outside.

What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops [[Matt. 10:27](#)].

I always think of a radio as being the best way of preaching from the housetops. Put an aerial on your rooftop and you can pick up even the most difficult radio stations. This is the way we preach from the housetops today, and I think it is an effective way.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [[Matt. 10:28](#)].

In other words, fear God.

Someone asked Cromwell why he was such a brave man. Cromwell replied, "I've learned that when you fear God, you do not have any man to fear."

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father [[Matt. 10:29](#)].

What a marvelous verse! The Lord takes care of the little sparrows. Have you ever watched a sparrow? I was in a hotel back East, in a downtown area, and there were hundreds of sparrows around a fountain on the grounds. I thought to myself, "There is not one of those birds that the Lord does not know about." How wonderful this is to remember.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered [[Matt. 10:30](#)].

God loves you! The Lord Jesus loves you more than your mother loved you. Did your mother ever count the hairs on your head? But God knows the number!

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows [[Matt. 10:31](#)].

Think of that -- if God knows where the sparrow is, my friend, He knows where you are. You will never get to the place where He doesn't know where you are.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 10:32-33](#)].

It stands to reason that if we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior from sin, we will acknowledge it publicly or whenever it is deemed necessary to give a testimony. Therefore, the statement of [verse 33](#) follows as day follows night. This verse alerts me to want to confess Him and never to deny Him. However, I don't want to make a fool of myself because there are times when I am not to cast my pearls before swine; that is, there are times when we do not honor Him by the use of His name in certain circles. Assuredly, we never want to deny Him -- neither will we deny Him.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword [[Matt. 10:34](#)].

This is a verse with which the pacifist has had difficulty. However, until all unrighteousness is put down and suppressed, the Person of Christ will cause the enmity of Satan, and a battle will ensue.

I wish a little of this verse would get into the United Nations today and into the thinking of some liberal preachers. Christ did not come to bring peace at His first coming. Sin is still in the world; and, as long as it stays upon the earth, God says that there will be no peace for the wicked.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household [[Matt. 10:35-36](#)].

Paul amplified the truth of this verse when he said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" ([1Cor. 1:18](#)). Actually, families have been divided by the preaching of the gospel. Also, brothers have been separated. There is a unity of believers, and that very unity makes a division with the unsaved world.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me [[Matt. 10:37](#)].

Unless you have really committed your life to Christ and paid a price, you cannot talk much about commitment. Personally, I do not brag about being a committed Christian because I find that I am in Simon Peter's class. But, thank God, He is faithful. That's the wonder of it all!

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me [[Matt. 10:38](#)].

I wish that I could have heard Him use that expression, "not worthy of me." Many of us are not, and it means that He is not going to use us unless we are really committed to Him. But, thank God, He will not throw us overboard!

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it [[Matt. 10:39](#)].

He is putting in contrast the life which we have here in the flesh with the gift of eternal life which comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is possible that when a person comes to Christ, he may be put to death because of his faith. This is not true in the United States yet, but it is true in other parts of the world even in our day. A man who loses his physical life for Christ shall find eternal life which takes him into the presence of Christ. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" ([2Cor. 5:8](#)).

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward [[Matt. 10:40-42](#)].

In [John 15](#) the Lord Jesus clarifies this section when He says that the world has hated Him and is going to hate His own. We ought not to be any more popular with the world than Jesus Christ is popular. The measure of our loyalty and faithfulness to Him is given in the prophet's reward and the righteous man's reward. If you defend the Lord Jesus as a prophet, you will receive a prophet's reward. If you receive Him as only a righteous man, you will receive a righteous man's reward. But if you acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior, you will receive a full reward. Our Lord makes it very clear that rewards are given on the basis of faithfulness.

Chapter 11

THEME: Jesus continues His ministry; is quizzed by the disciples of John; rejects the cities where He has performed mighty works, and issues a new invitation to individuals

The movement continues in this chapter. The Lord Jesus has enunciated the ethic, He has performed the miracles, and He has sent His disciples out to present His claims -- they have gone down the highways and byways until they have covered all the cities of Israel. Now what is the reception? What is the reaction to His messianic claim? Let me give it to you in one word: rejection!

This chapter makes a turning point in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In [verses 28-30](#) we will see that He gives a new message. It is a definite departure from the message of repentance in view of the presence of the King.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities [[Matt. 11:1](#)].

Having sent out His disciples, He Himself goes out. How important it was to get the Word of God out to the people! And in our day it is equally important.

Jesus Quizzed By The Disciples Of John (11:2-6)

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples [[Matt. 11:2](#)].

Back in [Matthew 4:12](#) it is recorded that John the Baptist was put in prison. So he has been imprisoned for a while now, but he has been kept informed about the movements of the Lord Jesus. John's disciples have been watching Jesus and reporting to John. John is expecting any day for the door of his prison to be opened, because he believes that Jesus is coming immediately to the throne to establish His Kingdom.

And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? [[Matt. 11:3](#)].

John's question is a logical one. He has every reason to believe that the King would have assumed power by this time. He is definitely puzzled that the Lord is moving so slowly toward the throne.

Note the Lord's answer to John.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me [[Matt. 11:4-6](#)].

The answer of Jesus is remarkable and can be understood only in light of the credentials which the Old Testament said the Messiah would have. This is a direct reference to [Isaiah 35:4-6](#); "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

Now waters did not break out in the wilderness nor were there streams in the desert when Jesus came. Why? Because He did not establish the Kingdom when He came the first time. But He was the King, and He had the credentials of the Messiah -- that is all He is saying. John would recognize the credentials.

Jesus Pays Tribute John The Baptist (11:7-19)

In the following verses the Lord Jesus defends John in case anyone wanted to criticize him.

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? [[Matt. 11:7](#)].

By the way, John was not the reed shaken with the wind; he was a wind shaking the reeds! In our day, the pulpit has become very weak because it is in subjection to somebody sitting out there in the pew who doesn't like the preacher. Or the message is tailored to suit a certain group in the church. Too often the pulpit is a reed that is shaken in the wind. Thank God for John the Baptist, a wind shaking the reeds!

Our Lord continues His commendation of John the Baptist --

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses [[Matt. 11:8](#)].

John the Baptist was rugged, a rugged individual!

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet [[Matt. 11:9](#)].

He was a prophet, but he was more than a prophet.

For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee [[Matt. 11:10](#)].

The Lord declares clearly that John is the fulfillment of [Malachi 3:1](#), which states: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." John was that messenger. John was specially chosen to introduce the Messiah to Israel. Note also [John 1:21-23](#).

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he [[Matt. 11:11](#)].

Sometimes we like to debate the question of who was greater: Abraham, Moses, or David. Jesus declares that John is greater than anyone in the past. No one topped John the Baptist.

"Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." When the Lord Jesus came, He began calling out a group of people who are even greater than John the Baptist. How can they be greater? Because they are in Christ and clothed with His righteousness.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force [[Matt. 11:12](#)].

This is a difficult verse to interpret because the "force" mentioned can be either internal or external. The forces of evil from without seek to destroy it, that is true. But also those who are committed wholeheartedly press into it; that is, they violently want to come in. There is a note of need and desperation. We have already seen that one young man ran

and fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Master, I will follow you whithersoever thou goest!" (see [Matt. 8:19](#)). There are these two aspects. I am not clear in my own thinking as to what He meant. He may have been referring to both aspects.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear [[Matt. 11:13-15](#)].

John the Baptist fulfilled the prediction of the messenger to come, as recorded in [Malachi 3:1](#). But the question arises: "If Israel had accepted Christ at His first coming, would He have established the kingdom immediately, and would John the Baptist have been Elijah?" The answer is yes. You say, "How can that be?" I have an answer for you: "I don't know." I only know that this is what Jesus said, and He can do things which I cannot explain. In fact, He does a lot of things which I can't explain; I simply accept them.

There are those who argue, "Well, if Christ intended to go to the cross and die, His offer of Himself as King was not a sincere offer." But it was sincere. "But," they insist, "what if Israel had accepted Jesus as their King?" Well, the point is that they didn't! These are "if" questions we are asking, and the fact is that the Jews rejected the Lord. "Iffy" questions pose problems that don't exist. And there are enough problems that do exist without making up some!

The next two verses compose one of the Lord's parables that was loaded with biting sarcasm and irony. The Lord did not give this story to hurt or to harm but to illustrate a great truth.

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented [[Matt. 11:16-17](#)].

This is a picture of a group of children out playing in the streets. One group says, "Let's play funeral." They play funeral for awhile, soon tire of it and then say, "Let's play wedding." Soon they grow tired of playing wedding. They go from one extreme to another. They are spoiled children. The generation Jesus was speaking to was like that, and our generation is also.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil [[Matt. 11:18](#)].

John was both austere and severe. And they didn't feel comfortable with him.

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children [[Matt. 11:19](#)].

Jesus was friendly. What about Him? "Oh, He is gluttonous. He's too friendly with sinners!" They weren't pleased with John, nor were they pleased with Jesus.

There are some folk that you simply cannot please, and you are better off to forget about them. They don't like one preacher because he just stands up there and in a monotone gives his sermon. Then the next preacher they don't like because he is very demonstrative and pounds the pulpit. Or one is too profound, and they don't understand him, and the other is too simple -- so they don't like him either. There are a lot of people whom no one can please, and that was certainly true in our Lord's day.

Jesus Rejects Unrepentant Cities (11:20-27)

We have now come to a tremendous change. Remember that Jesus is the King. He has enunciated the ethic, He has presented His credentials by performing miracles, He has preached the gospel that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, He has presented Himself, but His people have rejected Him. Their rejection has caused Him to make a decision, and He rejects them. He is the King, and the King always has the last word.

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes [[Matt. 11:20-21](#)].

Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities in the north near Capernaum where the Lord had His headquarters. He had performed many miracles in this area. They rejected Him, and now He pronounces a judgment upon them.

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you [[Matt. 11:22](#)].

Light creates responsibility. The Lord never had a ministry in Tyre or Sidon, nor did He have His headquarters there. But He spent a lot of time in the area of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and He holds them responsible for the light which He gave them. It is my understanding that there will be degrees of punishment as well as degrees of reward at the time of God's judgment. Even in our own day, there are many folk who have had a glorious opportunity to receive Christ, but they have turned their backs on Him.

Without going into detail, let me say this: I do not know what God will do with that person on a little island in the South Pacific who has never heard the gospel and bows down and worships an image. I do know what God is going to do with that person who comes and sits in church Sunday after Sunday and hears the gospel and does nothing about it.

Now the Lord speaks of Capernaum, His headquarters.

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day [[Matt. 11:23](#)].

What a privilege was theirs in having the headquarters of the Lord Jesus in their city! But they rejected Him. The Lord Jesus is saying that if the wicked city of Sodom had

witnessed the miracles that He had performed in Capernaum, they would have turned from their wickedness and would not have merited the judgment that came upon them.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee [[Matt. 11:24](#)].

This is the harshest language of all. Remember it fell from the lips of the gentle Jesus. He speaks here as the Judge and King. This strong language ought to make us sit up and listen. I would much rather be a Hottentot in the darkness of a jungle without having heard the gospel than to be an officer in one of our modern churches, having a Bible but never truly having accepted Christ as Savior.

Although Sodom and Gomorrah were terrible places, it will be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for cities that heard the message of Jesus and rejected Him.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight [[Matt. 11:25-26](#)].

The phrase "Lord of heaven" takes you back to [Genesis 14:19](#), where God is called by this name. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. Many wise people never learn this truth, but many babes understand it. Dr. Harry Ironside said many years ago, "Always put the cookies on the bottom shelf so the kiddos can get them." If you preach so children understand what you are saying, you can almost be sure the older folks will understand -- but sometimes the children get it and the adults miss it.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him [[Matt. 11:27](#)].

This is another way of saying, ". . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)).

Jesus Issues New Invitation To Individuals (11:28-30)

These verses bring us to a definite break and change in the Lord's message. Up to this point the Lord taught, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He had presented His credentials and had been rejected as the Messiah. These cities which have been mentioned turned their backs upon Him, and so had Jerusalem. The Lord now turns His back upon the nation Israel, no longer presenting to them the Kingdom. He is on His way to the cross, and His invitation is to the individual. Listen to Him:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light [[Matt. 11:28-30](#)].

This language is in contrast to what has preceded it in this chapter. It is like coming out of a blizzard into the warmth of a spring day, like passing from a storm into a calm, like going from darkness into light. This is a new message from Jesus. He turns from the corporate nation to the individual. It is no longer the national announcement about a kingdom but a personal invitation to find the "rest" of salvation.

"I will give you rest" is literally "I will rest you." When He speaks of being "heavy laden," He is referring to being burdened with sin. This same figure is used by Isaiah and the psalmist: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" ([Isa. 1:4](#)). "For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" ([Ps. 38:4](#)).

My friend, sin is too heavy for you to carry -- you'll really get a hernia if you try to carry your load of sin! The only place in the world to put that burden is at the Cross of Christ. He bore it for you, and He invites you to come and bring your burden of sin to Him. He can forgive you because on the cross He bore the burden of your sin.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" refers to the salvation of the sinner through Jesus Christ. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" refers to the practical sanctification of the believer. There is a rest which Jesus gives, and it is the rest of redemption. There is also a rest which the believer experiences, and it comes through commitment and consecration to Christ. You don't have to worry about being recognized; you don't have to jockey for position if you are committed to Christ. Frankly, I quit joining organizations because I got so tired of watching ambitious men trying to be chairman of something or trying to be president of something. If you are committed to Christ, you don't have to worry about that. He will put you exactly where He wants you when you are yoked up to Him.

Chapter 12

THEME: Conflict and final break of Jesus with the religious rulers

Again let me call your attention to the movement in the Gospel of Matthew. If you miss it, you miss the message that is here. Matthew is not trying to give a biography of the life of Jesus, nor is he recording the events in chronological order. He presents Christ as King -- He was born a King and gave what we call the Sermon on the Mount, which was the ethic of the Kingdom, the manifesto of the King. He demonstrated that He had the dynamic in the miracles He performed, then He sent out His apostles. The reaction was rejection! And then the King pronounced judgment on the cities.

Now there breaks out into the open a conflict between the Lord Jesus and the religious rulers of that day -- the Pharisees in particular. Apparently, they were friendly to Him at first, but now they break with Him over the question of the Sabbath day.

We will see the Sabbath question in two places: on the outside in the field, then again on the inside in the synagogue.

Jesus Claims To Be Lord Of The Sabbath (12:1-13)

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat [[Matt. 12:1](#)].

We will see in this episode that Jesus asserts that He is Lord of the Sabbath day. But before we get involved in the sabbatic argument (which has been raging ever since!), let's look at the reason the disciples were pulling off and eating the grain. Why were they doing it? Because they were hungry. Why were they hungry? Because they were following Jesus. You remember that He had said to the young man who wanted to follow Him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" ([Matt. 8:20](#)). And at this time, they were hungry. This is another reminder of the poverty that our Lord bore. And we will see Him defend His disciples' actions. This is where the break with the religious rulers came.

But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day [[Matt. 12:2](#)].

The Pharisees say to the Lord Jesus, "Why do You permit it?"

But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him [[Matt. 12:3](#)].

We find the record of this in [1Samuel 21:1-6](#). It was during the days of David's rejection as king while Saul was ruling. Likewise, the Lord Jesus was being rejected as King; His messianic claim had not been acknowledged. Now He takes care of His men -- regardless of the Sabbath day observance. And David took care of his men although it meant breaking the Mosaic Law.

How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? [[Matt. 12:4-5](#)].

The priests worked on the Sabbath day.

But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple [[Matt. 12:6](#)].

The Lord Jesus here claimed superiority over the most holy center of their religious life, which was the temple. As far as the Pharisees were concerned, He had blasphemed. Not only had He broken the Sabbath, but He had blasphemed.

But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless [[Matt. 12:7](#)].

"I will have mercy and not sacrifice" comes from [Hosea 6:6](#). Our Lord defends His men by saying that they did not break the Sabbath day. Why?

For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day [[Matt. 12:8](#)].

Believe me, He put His hand on the most sacred observance they had when He said that He was Lord of the Sabbath day. In the eyes of the Pharisees, He could make no greater claim. It certainly engendered their bitterness and their hatred.

Now we leave the fields where this encounter took place, and we go into the synagogue -- but we are still faced with the same Sabbath question.

And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue [[Matt. 12:9](#)].

Notice that "he went into their synagogue" -- not ours but theirs. He said something similar regarding the temple. At first it was God's temple, but He finally said, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? [[Matt. 12:10-11](#)].

Was this man with the withered hand "planted" there, deliberately, by the Pharisees to trap Jesus into healing him? If so, then there are two important admissions on the part of the enemies of Jesus:

1. They admitted He had power to heal the sick. As we have seen, the enemies of Jesus never questioned His ability to perform miracles. You have to be two thousand years away from it and working in a musty library on a master's or doctor's degree before you can question His miracles. The Pharisees freely admitted that He had power to heal the sick. This is why they planted this man with the withered hand.

2. They acknowledged that when a helpless man was placed in His pathway, He was moved by compassion to heal him, even on the Sabbath day. What an admission!

Their question about the legality of healing on the Sabbath day was designed to trap Him. But Jesus actually trapped His enemies. They conceded that a sheep should be rescued on the Sabbath day -- in fact, the Mosaic Law made allowances for that.

How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days [[Matt. 12:12](#)].

This is the crux of the whole matter: Should He do good on the Sabbath day? Regardless of their answer --

Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other [[Matt. 12:13](#)].

Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath day. Did He break the Law? What is your answer? My answer is that He did not break the Law.

The Pharisees Plot The Death Of Jesus (12:14-21)

This marks the break between the religious rulers and Jesus. Here is where they made the decision to destroy Him.

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him [[Matt. 12:14](#)].

Up to this point the Pharisees had been friendly. They had wanted to hitch their wagon to His star and go with Him. But the Lord refused to go along with them, and they became His enemies. The break is made over the question of the Sabbath day, and the conflict comes out in the open. From here on these bloodhounds of hate get on His trail and never let up until they fold their arms beneath His cross. They begin now to plot His death, and they undoubtedly want to arrest Him at this time, but they are afraid of the crowds.

But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all [[Matt. 12:15](#)].

The action of the Pharisees led Jesus to withdraw temporarily because His hour had not yet come. They will not touch Him until the appointed time. It is interesting to note in this verse that Jesus did not heal only a few in the crowd -- He healed them all. We cannot even conceive of the impression that this made in that day. It was something absolutely astounding. They had to accept or reject Him; it was impossible to be neutral.

He is still controversial today. The enemy is still after Him. New dirty plays and dirty books are blaspheming Him. You will either be His friend or His enemy. He will be your Savior or your Judge. You cannot get rid of Jesus Christ.

He healed the multitudes --

And charged them that they should not make him known [[Matt. 12:16](#)].

The Lord did not come to this earth as a thaumaturgist, that is, a wonder worker. He came to present His claims as Messiah. When He was rejected, He continued on His course toward the cross to become the Savior of the world. His miracles caused crowds to press in upon Him so that He could not carry on His ministry as He wished.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory [[Matt. 12:17-20](#)].

"A bruised reed shall he not break" -- no, He will instead bind up that "reed" who will let Him do so. "And smoking flax shall he not quench" -- no, if that one continues to reject

Him, the smoking flax will break out into the fire of judgment. The Lord won't quench it because man has a free will.

And in his name shall the Gentiles trust [[Matt. 12:21](#)].

In our day, friend, there is a definite moving out -- not only toward the fulfillment of prophecy in general, but for the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Gentiles. They are to be saved. Christ's rejection by His own people led to His gracious offer to the Gentiles. In the Book of Acts we read that He commissioned Paul to be a missionary to the Gentiles: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" ([Acts 26:18](#)).

The Unpardonable Sin (12:22-37)

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? [[Matt. 12:22-23](#)].

In other words, "This is our Messiah. He has the credentials." This was a tremendous miracle He performed, just as great as the raising of the dead if not greater. The continued miracles of Jesus in healing and casting out demons convinced the people that He was the Son of David, the Messiah. But what did the Pharisees say?

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils [[Matt. 12:24](#)].

This is the question of the unpardonable sin. Follow this very carefully.

And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges [[Matt. 12:25-27](#)].

They would never say that their own people cast out demons by Beelzebub.

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you [[Matt. 12:28](#)].

"The kingdom of God is come unto you" in the presence of the Messiah. Christ is saying, "I am here! My power to cast out demons is My credential."

Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come [[Matt. 12:29-32](#)].

There is no sin committed yesterday that the Lord would not forgive today because He died for all sin. The Holy Spirit came into the world to make real the salvation of Christ to the hearts of men. If you resist the working of the Spirit of God when He speaks to you, my friend, there is no forgiveness, of course. There is no forgiveness because you have rejected salvation made real to you by the Holy Spirit. And it is the work of the Spirit of God to regenerate you.

In [Mark 3](#) the Lord amplifies the matter of the unpardonable sin by saying that it attributes the Spirit's work to Satan, that Christ had performed these miracles by Beelzebub when actually He was doing them by the power of the Spirit of God. You see, they were rejecting the witness of Himself and of the Holy Spirit.

In our day that particular sin cannot be committed because it could only be committed when Jesus was here upon the earth. There is no act of sin that you could commit for which there is no forgiveness. Of course, if you resist the Holy Spirit, there is no forgiveness because He is bringing forgiveness. It is like the man who is dying from a certain disease, and the doctor tells him there is a remedy for it. The man refuses to take the remedy and dies, not from the disease but from refusing to take the remedy. There is a remedy for the disease of sin, and the Holy Spirit applies it; but if you resist it, there is no remedy. That is the only way sin can be unpardonable today.

Now the Lord says:

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh [[Matt. 12:34](#)].

"O generation of vipers" -- you may remember that John the Baptist had called them the same thing.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things [[Matt. 12:35](#)].

"What is in the well of the heart will come out through the bucket of the mouth," someone has said. This scathing denunciation of the religious rulers by Jesus reveals that He has rejected them. Had they committed the unpardonable sin? At least the break with these enemies is final and the wound will not be healed.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment [[Matt. 12:36](#)].

"Idle word" means blasphemies.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned [[Matt. 12:37](#)].

You will be "condemned" because you are speaking the thing which is in your heart.

The Scribes And Pharisees Demand A Sign (12:38-42)

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee [[Matt. 12:38](#)].

The scribes and Pharisees now use another subtle approach to Him. They appear to fall in step with His program by asking for a sign. They have no intention of believing because of a sign. They are trying to trap Him. Note how the Lord answers them.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas [[Matt. 12:39](#)].

What was the sign of Jonah? Well, listen to Him --

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [[Matt. 12:40](#)].

The Lord categorically refused to grant them a sign but directed them back to two incidents in the Old Testament. The first incident is the account of the prophet Jonah. Jonah was apparently raised from the dead when he was in the fish. God brought him out of darkness and death into light and life. Jonah's experience was typical of the coming interment and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here [[Matt. 12:41](#)].

The Ninevites received Jonah and his preaching after his miraculous deliverance from the big fish, and they repented. The acts of Israel, as a nation, place her in a much worse position because she did not receive her Messiah and did not repent.

The second incident that Jesus referred them to concerns Solomon.

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here [[Matt. 12:42](#)].

Jesus was greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon. The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon and traveled from the ends of the earth to hear his wisdom. And the Lord Jesus Christ had come from heaven, but they would not turn to Him.

Valueless Reformation (12:43-50)

Next Jesus gives one of the most profound and startling parables.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none [[Matt. 12:43](#)].

A man has an unclean spirit, and the unclean spirit leaves him. The man thinks he is all cleaned up. Then what happens?

Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished [[Matt. 12:44](#)].

In other words, reformation is no good. My friend, you can quit doing many things, but that won't make you a Christian. If everyone in the world would quit sinning right now, there wouldn't be any more Christians in the next minute or in the next day, because quitting sin doesn't make Christians. Reformation is not what we need.

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation [[Matt. 12:45](#)].

This same situation is with us today. The hardest people in the world are unsaved church members because they think they are all right. They have undergone self-reformation -- empty, swept, and garnished. They are like a vacant house, and all the evil spirits have to do is move in. The Devil owns them, and they don't recognize this fact. Reformation means death and destruction. Regeneration means life and liberty.

The final section of this chapter is even more startling, and it belongs with what has immediately preceded. There is a relationship that is greater than mother and son and even blood brothers! This is a relationship which is established with God through Jesus Christ by faith in Him.

While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! [[Matt. 12:46-49](#)].

The Lord is saying that the strongest relationship today is the relationship between Christ and a believer. Friend, if you are a child of God and you have unsaved family members, you are closer to Jesus Christ than you are to your own kin, including the mother that bore you. You are more closely related to other believers than you are to unsaved members of your family. This is tremendous! He is talking about a new relationship.

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven,
the same is my brother, and sister, and mother [[Matt. 12:50](#)].

And what is the will of the Father? That you hear the Lord Jesus Christ, that you accept Him and trust Him.

Chapter 13

THEME: The parables of the Kingdom of Heaven show the direction of the Kingdom after Israel's rejection of it until the King returns to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth

As we have said, the Gospel of Matthew is probably the key Gospel to the Bible. It is the open door to both the Old and the New Testaments. If that is true, then chapter 13 is the key to the Gospel of Matthew. This makes chapter 13 all-important. It will give us a better understanding of what the Kingdom of Heaven is than any other place in the Book. We call it the Mystery Parables Discourse, and it is one of the three major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew.

1. The Sermon on the Mount looks back to the past. It is the law for the land.
2. The Mystery Parables Discourse reveals the condition of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world during the present age.
3. The Olivet Discourse looks to the future, to the return of the King and the things beyond this age.

Let me remind you that our Lord followed John the Baptist in preaching, ". . . Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 4:17](#)). And our Lord enunciated the law of that Kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount. Then He demonstrated that He had the power, the dynamic, after which He sent His disciples out with the message. The message was met by rejection -- Israel rejected its King. Therefore, our Lord hands down a judgment against the cities where His mighty works had been done and against the religious rulers. When they asked Him for a sign, He said that no sign would be given to them except that of Jonah. Jonah was a resurrection sign, and they were to have that fulfilled in Christ shortly after this. Finally, He gave that very personal invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (lit., "rest you")" ([Matt. 11:28](#)).

Now the question arises: What will happen to the Kingdom of Heaven? It is apparent that He will not establish it on the earth at His first coming. So what will happen to the Kingdom of Heaven during the interval between the suffering and the glory of Christ? Well, in the Mystery Parables Discourse our Lord sets before us Kingdom-of-Heaven conditions on earth during this interval, using seven or eight parables.

We call them Mystery Parables because in the Word of God a mystery is something hidden or secret up to a certain time and then revealed. The church is a mystery (according to this definition) since it was not a matter of revelation in the Old Testament. It was revealed after the death and resurrection of Christ. Actually, there could be no church until Christ died and rose again. [Ephesians 5:25](#) says that ". . . Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is important to note that the Kingdom of Heaven is not synonymous with the church nor is the church synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven today is all Christendom (the portion of the world in which Christianity is predominant can be considered as Christendom). Obviously, the church is in Christendom, but it is not all of it by any means.

These Mystery Parables show the direction of the Kingdom after it had been offered and rejected by Israel. They reveal what is going to take place between the time of Christ's rejection and the time when He returns to the earth as King. With these parables our Lord covers the entire period between His rejection by Israel and His return to the earth to establish His Kingdom. I consider them very important.

As we begin this chapter, notice that the very actions of Jesus are interesting.

The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore [[Matt. 13:1-2](#)].

Notice the symbolism here. "The same day went Jesus out of the house," which speaks of the house of Israel. "And sat by the sea side" -- the sea represents the gentile nations (a symbolism used elsewhere in Scripture). Our Lord is leaving the nation of Israel and turning to the world. He is now speaking of what will take place in the world until He returns as King.

This act denotes a tremendous change that has taken place in His method. Great multitudes were gathered together to hear Him, and He went into a ship and began to talk to them as they stood on the shore.

Parable Of The Sower (13:3-12)

Although our Lord gives several parables in this chapter, He interprets only two of them: the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares. His interpretation is a guide to the symbolism in the other parables. For instance, in this parable of the sower, the birds represent Satan. Now when He uses the symbol of birds in another parable, we may be sure that they do not represent something good. We need to be consistent and follow our Lord's interpretation.

The parable of the sower is the first of the Mystery Parables and may be considered as the foundation for all of them.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow [[Matt. 13:3](#)].

I'll just run ahead and give you our Lord's interpretation of the sower. He will tell us later that the sower is the Son of man and that the seed represents the Word of God.

And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold [[Matt. 13:4-8](#)].

Sowing seed was a familiar sight in Palestine. They would sort of scratch the surface of the ground with a very crude plow. Sometimes they didn't even do that much. Then the sower would go out and fling the seeds upon the earth. Even today in our land in the springtime, all the way from Pocatello, Idaho, to Pensacola, Florida, and from Minnesota to Muleshoe, Texas, you will see farmers sowing wheat, corn, and cotton. It is a very familiar sight -- of course, we use machines to sow the seed, while in that day it was sown by hand.

As I have mentioned, the sower represents the Lord Jesus -- we learn this from the parable of the wheat and tares ([v. 37](#)). The Lord Jesus is the One sowing the seed, and I feel that this defines His work today in the world. He was the King, but He laid aside His regal robes, and today He is doing the work of a farmer, sowing seed -- but He is still the King.

The seed, we learn from [verse 19](#), represents the Word of God. The field symbolizes the world ([v. 38](#)). Notice that it is the world, not the church. We are talking about a world situation. I think the picture is something like this: Here is the church in the world, and outside there are multitudes of people who have not received Christ. The Word of God is given to this one, and the Word is given to that one, and the Word is given to another. One accepts, another does not accept. Our business is to sow the seed, although not everyone will receive it.

The Lord Jesus has charge of this great program of sowing seed. He has given me a little corner to work in, and my business is to sow seed. I want to be specific here. This is the day for sowing seed. I don't want to split hairs, but the "harvest" is not the picture for today. But someone says, "Didn't Christ say, 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest'?" Yes, and let's look at it again: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" ([Matt. 9:36-38](#)).

This passage occurs just before the Lord sent out His apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The age of the Law was coming to an end. Harvest time comes after seed has been sown. For fifteen hundred years, approximately, under Law, the seed had been sown. Then the harvest came, and a new age, a new dispensation, came in. At the close of one age there is a harvest, and at the beginning of another age is the sowing of seed. But I

want to emphasize that the harvest at the end of an age is judgment. We will see that in some of the parables which follow.

However, in our day we are to be sowing the seed of the Word of God. I rejoice when I receive a letter from someone who has listened to my teaching of the Word by radio. Some folk listen for a year or more, and finally the seed germinates and brings forth fruit. It is my business to sow the seed while I am in the world, and it is your business also, my friend.

Now notice where the seed falls. It falls on four types of soil, and three-fourths of the seeds do not grow -- they die. There was nothing wrong with the seed, but the soil was the problem. You can argue election all you want to, but in this parable there is a lot of free will exhibited. The condition of the soil is all important as far as the seed is concerned.

Now let's look at our Lord's interpretation of the types of soil on which the seed fell. In [verse 4](#) He says that some of it fell by the wayside, and the birds came and ate it up. In [verse 19](#) He explains to His disciples the meaning of it --

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side [[Matt. 13:19](#)].

The birds represent the evil one -- the Devil takes away the seed sown by the wayside. This is something which ought to cause every church member to examine his own heart. My friend, don't apply this to the other fellow, apply it to yourself. Someone has written a clever little poem which says:

When you get to heaven You will likely view, Many folk there Who'll be
a shock to you. But don't act surprised, Or even show a care, For they
might be a little shocked To see you there.

The wayside soil apparently represents church members, professing Christians. They heard the Word of God, but it was not the hearing of faith. The Word was not mixed with faith -- or if it was, it was a formal, intellectual faith which simply nodded the head. In other words, to folk like this, Christianity is a sideline. Belonging to the church is like belonging to a lodge or a club. These folk are in deep freeze. Not only do we find them in our churches, but some of them have fallen away from the church and are in cults and "isms."

The second group are represented by the rocky soil.

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended [[Matt. 13:20-21](#)].

These rocky-ground folk are the opposite of the first group. It was the Devil who took the Word away from the wayside hearers, but the flesh is the culprit with this group. Instead

of being in deep freeze, they are in the oven -- warm, emotional, shedding tears, greatly moved. These are what I call Alka-Seltzer Christians. There is a lot of fizz in them. They make as much fuss during a service as a rocket on a launching pad, but they never get into orbit. I classify them as the Southern California type. They have great zeal and energy during special meetings, but they are like burned out Roman candles after the meetings are over.

I stood on the rear end of a train, years ago, going through Kansas. Someone had thrown a paper onto the railroad tracks. As our train sped past, the paper fluttered up into the air and went in every direction. As soon as the train had gone by, the paper settled down on the track and was soon dead still. As I looked way back at the paper lying there, I thought, "That is just like a lot of so-called Christians. When there is a sensational meeting in progress, they really get enthusiastic, but they have no real relationship with Christ. It is just an emotional high." They are the rocky-ground folk.

The third group of hearers is like thorny ground --

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful [[Matt. 13:22](#)].

With these folk the world crowds out the Word of God. The Devil got the wayside folk, and the flesh took care of the rocky-ground folk, but the world chokes out the Word for this class of hearers. The cares of the world move in. Sometimes it is poverty, and other times it is the deceitfulness of riches. It is quite interesting that folk at each end of the social spectrum -- extreme poverty and extreme prosperity -- are folk who are the most difficult to reach for Christ. I find that a great many people have let the cares of the world crowd out the Word of God. These three types of soil do not represent three types of believers -- they are not believers at all! They have heard the Word and have only professed to receive it. My friend, it is well for all of us to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are really in the faith.

Thank God, some seed falls on good ground, and our Lord interprets this for us --

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty [[Matt. 13:23](#)].

These are the hearers who receive the Word and understand it. Some of them don't bring forth much fruit -- only thirtyfold, but some bring forth an hundredfold!

There must be an understanding of the Word. The Ethiopian eunuch, you remember, was reading the Word, but he didn't understand it -- although he wanted to understand it. So the Spirit of God put Philip there as a hitchhiker. He took a ride with the Ethiopian and gave him a ticket to heaven. He explained the Word to him -- that the One who was led as a sheep to the slaughter was the Lord Jesus Christ, that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Ethiopian believed and received Him.

Philip was sowing the seed of the Word of God. This is a Kingdom-of-Heaven situation as it reveals that the Sower, the Lord Jesus Christ, is sowing the seed of the Word of God in the world and that the Holy Spirit applies it to the hearts of those who want to believe.

After our Lord had given the parable of the sower, He said something quite interesting --

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear [[Matt. 13:9](#)].

Well, if we have these things on the side of our head called ears, can't we hear Him? Yes, but notice the question and His answer --

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? [[Matt. 13:10](#)].

Someone has said that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. This is a good definition. But the word parable is from the Greek parabole. We get our English word ball from it. You throw something down beside an object to measure it. For example, it's like putting a ruler down beside a table to measure it. That ruler is a parable; it is put down for the purpose of measuring. Our Lord gave parables to measure heavenly truth which He could set before us.

Why did He do it?

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given [[Matt. 13:11](#)].

If a man wants to know the Word of God, he can know it. He who wants to know the truth can know it. But you can shut your ears to it. There are multitudes of so-called broadminded people who shut their ears to the Word of God. If you don't want to hear it, you won't hear it, my friend. Not only would you fail to hear it, but you wouldn't understand it if you did hear it. You must have the kind of ear that wants to hear the Word of God.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath [[Matt. 13:12](#)].

If you know a little truth and you want to know more, the Lord will add to it. If you don't want to know the truth, the Lord will see to it that you won't get it. You see, the Lord will never shut the door to one who wants to hear. He makes it very clear that this is His reason for speaking in parables. Those who don't want to hear will not understand them.

The Lord drew His parables from commonplace things, things that were at the fingertips of the people in that day. He gave them great spiritual truths illustrated by things they knew and could see. Someone has put this concept in verse --

He talked of grass and wind and rain And fig trees and fair weather, And made it His delight to bring Heaven and earth together. He spoke of lilies, vines and corn, The sparrow and the raven. And words so natural, yet so wise Were on men's hearts engraven.

In the parable of the sower, we see what could be called a Kingdom-of-Heaven condition; that is, it exhibits God's present rulership over the entire earth as He calls out a people to His name. And God is carrying out His program today through the church, the called-out body, composed of every true believer. Therefore, we have a Kingdom-of-Heaven condition today as God is carrying on His program of bringing folk to a saving knowledge of Christ.

The Parable Of The Tares (13:24-30)

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field [[Matt. 13:24](#)].

In this parable our Lord picks up where He left off in the parable of the sower. He has told us that only one-fourth of the sown seed ever got into good ground. The other three-fourths never did produce anything because the folk who heard the Word did not respond to it. In other words, they were not saved. Of the people who heard the Word of God, only one-fourth were truly saved. Frankly, in my own ministry I have found the percentage even lower than that. If one out of ten responding to my invitation to receive Christ is genuine, I feel that my batting average is good. Other Christian workers tell me the same story. A member of the team of a very prominent evangelist has told me that only three percent of their inquirers can be considered genuine converts. So you see, our batting average is not too good, but we thank God for each person who does come to Christ. We are in a Kingdom-of-Heaven situation, giving out the Word of God -- and this is what happens to it.

But now we see another facet of the Kingdom-of-Heaven condition in the world today. It is a picture of a man who sowed good seed in his field --

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way [[Matt. 13:25](#)].

Notice who is asleep. While men slept, the enemy came. Remember, the sower is the Lord, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps. Satan is the enemy, and he sows tares among the wheat. The tares are false doctrine. There's a great deal of that type of sowing today.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also [[Matt. 13:26](#)].

As wheat and tares first begin to grow, it is difficult to distinguish between them. Frankly, a lot of cults and "ism" also sound good at first. You cannot tell them from the real thing until about the twelfth or thirteenth lesson. Those are the lessons in which they introduce their false doctrine. Someone once said to me, "Dr. McGee, you should not criticize so-and-so. I listened to him, and he preached the gospel." Well, he does preach the gospel every now and then. But it is the other things he says that are in error. You see, he sows tares among the wheat.

Now we will see that the sower knew who was responsible for the tares --

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn [[Matt. 13:27-30](#)].

This is a very important picture to see and to interpret. Our Lord says, "Don't try to pull up the tares. Let them both grow together, and when they finally head up, you will be able to recognize which are tares and which are wheat."

Somebody comes to me and says, "Pastor McGee, do you think the world is getting better?" I reply that I do think it is getting better. Someone else asks me, "Do you think the world is getting worse?" I tell him that I do believe the world is getting worse. A third party who heard me give both answers, says, "What are you trying to do -- ride the fence? It is not like you to try to please everybody." Right! But actually, both are true. The wheat is growing and the tares are growing. The world is getting better -- the wheat is heading up. Never has there been so much Bible teaching as there is today. I thank God for that. And there are many wonderful saints of God who love His Word and who would die defending it. That wheat is growing, my friend!

However, the world is also getting worse. There are a lot of tares growing. I have been a pastor for a long time. When I began my ministry, I entered a denomination with the idea of cleaning it up. I was the one that just about got cleaned out. I found I could not straighten out my denomination. I was thankful to find out from this passage, and related passages, that my business was to preach the Word. I don't go around pulling up tares anymore because I found that when you pull up tares, you also pull up some wheat with them. But now I know that my business is not to pull up tares but to sow the wheat. Sowing the Word of God is my responsibility.

Both tares and wheat are growing in this world. This is a Kingdom-of-Heaven situation in Christendom during this interval between Christ's rejection and His return to establish His Kingdom upon the earth. It is not a picture of Christ's church. "Well," you say, "it certainly is a picture of the organized church." That is true, but the organized church is not His church. His church is composed of that invisible number of saints. When I say invisible, I mean that they are not confined to an organization. (Actually, I do not like the term invisible because I find out that a lot of the saints think it means that they are to be invisible Sunday night and at the midweek service. In fact, they are invisible many times.) The true church is made up of true believers, irrespective of any denomination. True believers are those who have trusted Christ as Savior, are resting in Him, and love His Word -- this is the real test. Don't be disturbed that the wheat and tares are growing together. One day the Lord will put in His sickle and separate the tares and wheat. I am thankful it will not be my job because I am afraid I would pull up some of the wheat.

The Parable Of The Mustard Seed (13:31-32)

This parable presents a different kind of seed.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof [[Matt. 13:31-32](#)].

The mustard tree is an unlikely symbol of the church or of individual Christians. Ordinarily, fruit-bearing trees are used to depict believers. Mustard is a condiment and has no food value. It's not wheat germ, loaded with vitamins; it's just good on hot dogs and hamburgers. Mustard is not a food you can live on.

The mustard seed does not grow into a mighty oak like the little acorn does. It is a shrub which thrives best in desert lands.

The mustard seed "is the least of all seeds." Several years ago a liberal preacher in our area made the discovery that the mustard seed is not the least of all seeds. He thought he had found an error in the Bible. What did our Lord mean by "the least of all seeds"? It was the least of all seeds that the people in His audience knew about. It is my understanding that it is least of all the seeds in the category of plants to which the mustard belongs. It is a very small seed.

"But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." This little seed, which should have become an herb, got to the fertilizer and became a tree large enough for birds to roost in.

This parable reveals the outward growth of Christendom as the parable of the leaven speaks of the internal condition of Christendom. The church has not converted the world, but it has had a tremendous influence on the world. Any place that Christianity has gone can be called Christendom.

This parable reveals the outward growth of the organized church. The church and the world have become horribly mixed. There has been real integration between man in the church and man in the world. They live and act very much alike in our day. The Christian should be salt in the world, not mustard!

"The birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Years ago I heard another liberal preacher interpret the birds as being different denominations. He spoke of the Baptist birds, the Presbyterian birds, the Methodist birds, and all other church groups as being birds. That, of course, is a contradiction of our Lord's own interpretation of the birds in the first parable. We can be sure that the birds in the parables of this discourse do not speak of anything good, but rather they represent evil. The birds are the ones that took the seed which fell by the wayside. Our Lord said that they represent the enemy who is Satan. I am afraid that Christendom today is a mustard tree filled with a lot of dirty birds!

The Parable Of The Leaven (13:33-43)

The parable of the leaven is the key parable of this chapter. Let me try to help you realize the importance of it. First of all, the Gospel of Matthew is the key book of the Bible. Secondly, chapter 13 is the key chapter of Matthew. And thirdly, [verse 33](#) is the key verse of chapter 13. So actually, what we have here is one of the key verses of the Bible!

Now notice the very important teaching in this verse --

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened [[Matt. 13:33](#)].

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven" -- but don't stop there -- "which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal." What does the leaven represent? There are those who interpret the leaven as the gospel, and they ought to know better! Nowhere is leaven used as a principle of good; it is always a principle of evil. The word leaven occurs ninety-eight times in the Bible -- about seventy-five times in the Old Testament and about twenty-three times in the New Testament -- and it is always used in a bad sense. The great scholar, Dr. Lightfoot, made the statement that rabbinical writers regularly used leaven as a symbol of evil. In the Old Testament it was forbidden to be used in the offerings made to God. In the New Testament our Lord warned to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (see [Matt. 16:6](#)). And the apostle Paul spoke of the leaven of malice and wickedness (see [1Cor. 5:8](#)). Symbolism in Scripture does not contradict itself, and we may be certain that leaven is not used in a good sense here in [Matthew 13](#). Leaven is not the gospel.

The gospel is represented by the three measures of meal. How do we know this? Because meal is made out of grain or seed, and our Lord has already told us in the parable of the sower that the seed represents the Word of God.

Remember that this parable is a picture of what happens to the Word of God on this earth during the interval between Christ's rejection and His exaltation when He will return to set up His Kingdom. Note what happens to the Word of God represented by the meal. This woman comes along -- I hope you ladies will forgive me for pointing this out -- and when a woman is used in a doctrinal sense in Scripture, she is always used as a principle of evil. She takes the leaven and hides it in the meal. If the leaven represents the gospel, why in the world did she hide it? The gospel is to be shouted from the housetops and heralded to the very ends of the earth. Obviously, the leaven is a principle of evil, and the woman puts it in the meal, which represents the gospel, the Word of God.

We certainly see this in reality in our day. There is no cult or "ism" which ignores the Bible. I find that even those who worship the Devil, the demon worshipers, use the Bible. False teachers of every description put leaven in the meal, the Word of God.

What does leaven do? Well, leaven is a substance, such as yeast, used to produce fermentation. When it is put in bread dough, it causes it to rise. And it makes it tasty also. That is the reason a great many people find a thrill in some of the cults. Unleavened bread is just blah as far as the natural taste is concerned. A little leaven really helps it. I grew up in the South, and my mother used to make delicious biscuits. She would put leaven in the dough and put them on the back of the stove to rise. If I came running into the kitchen,

she would shush me because she didn't want those biscuits to fall. When they got to a certain height, she would stop the fermentation by putting them in the oven and baking them. Have you ever seen what happens when you let dough continue to rise? I tell you, it makes a pan of corruption -- something you wouldn't want to eat! Leaven is a principle of evil.

This parable teaches that the intrusion of wrong doctrine into the church will finally lead to total apostasy -- "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, ". . . when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" ([Luke 18:8](#)). The way the question is couched in the Greek, it demands a negative answer. In other words, he is saying that when He does return the world will be in total apostasy. And the apostle Paul, writing to a young man studying for the ministry, warns that the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (see [2Tim. 4:3](#)). The final, total apostasy of the church is revealed in the church of Laodicea (see [Rev. 3:14-19](#)).

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world [[Matt. 13:34-35](#)].

"I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" -- nail down that statement. Our Lord is giving us a brand-new truth. The things He is revealing now, in parables, have never been revealed like this in the Old Testament.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field [[Matt. 13:36](#)].

Jesus has sent the multitude away and has gathered His disciples about Him. He is going to interpret the parable of the tares to them. We have already gone over it, but let's read it as the Scripture states it.

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world [[Matt. 13:37-40](#)].

This is an exact picture of the condition in Christendom in our day. My Lord never missed His predictions. This has been fulfilled as accurately as anything possibly could be.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [[Matt. 13:41](#)].

You see, in the Kingdom during the Millennium there will be evil rearing its ugly head. But it will be taken out.

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear [[Matt. 13:42-43](#)].

These harsh words of Scripture came from the gentle lips of our wonderful Lord.

The last three parables are unusual in that they deal with certain different aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven as it is today.

The Parable Of The Treasure Hid In A Field (13:44)

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field [[Matt. 13:44](#)].

The "treasure" is Israel. The "field" is the world. The "man" is the Son of man who gave Himself to redeem the nation Israel. This is not a sinner buying the gospel because the gospel is not hidden in a field. Israel, however, is actually buried in the world today. Someone says, "Well, they are a nation right now." They are, but they certainly are having a struggle. They will not be able to enjoy their land until they receive it from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was very much interested in reading a paper that came from Israel concerning a convention of certain scientists. In a picture I noted above the platform a great sign, printed in both Hebrew and English, which read something like this: SCIENCE WILL BRING PEACE TO THIS LAND. May I say to you, friend, science will not bring peace to Israel -- nor to any country. Only the Prince of Peace is able to do that.

Actually, Israel is buried throughout the world. The largest population of Jews is not in Israel but is in New York City. And Jewish people are scattered throughout the world. But God is not through with Israel as a nation. The apostle Paul wrote: "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew . . ." ([Rom. 11:1-2](#)).

Paul believed that the Lord was not through with Israel. Zechariah, one of the last writers in the Old Testament, wrote that a new day would come for Israel: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" ([Zech. 12:10](#)).

The prophet Jeremiah in many passages speaks of the regathering of the people of Israel and of God bringing them to their own land. That time is still future. When God regathers them, it will be by miracles so great that they will even forget their miraculous deliverance from Egypt which has been celebrated longer than any other religious holiday. God is not through with the nation Israel, and this parable makes that fact very clear. Israel is the treasure hid in a field, and Christ is the One who "for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." In fact, He gave Himself to redeem the nation. Our Lord purchased them with His blood, just as He bought your salvation and my salvation. Zechariah writes of the cleansing which will take place at the time of Christ's return to this earth: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" ([Zech. 13:1](#)).

The Parable Of The Pearl Of Great Price (13:45-46)

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it [[Matt. 13:45-46](#)].

The popular interpretation of this parable says that the sinner is the merchantman and the pearl of great price is Christ. The sinner sells all that he has that he might buy Christ. One hymn says:

I have found the pearl of greatest price. My heart doth sing for joy. And
sing I must for Christ is mine; Christ shall my song employ.

I cannot accept this interpretation, and I have dismissed it as unworthy of thoughtful consideration. To begin with, who is looking for goodly pearls? Are sinners looking for salvation? My Bible does not read that way, nor has that been my experience as a minister. Sinners are not looking for salvation. The merchantman cannot be the sinner because he has nothing with which to pay. To begin with, he is not seeking Christ, and if he were, how could he buy Him? The merchantman sells all that he has -- how can a sinner sell all that he has when he is dead in trespasses and sins (see [Eph. 2:1](#))? Further, the Scriptures are very clear that Christ and salvation are not for sale. Salvation is a gift -- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)). God so loved that He gave. And in [Romans 6:23](#) we are told that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The correct interpretation of this parable reveals Christ as the merchantman. He left His heavenly home and came to this earth to find a pearl of great price. He found lost sinners and died for them by shedding His precious blood. He sold all that He had to buy us and redeem us to God. Paul told this to the Corinthians: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" ([2Cor. 8:9](#)). He redeems us to God -- He bought us.

Now let's look at the pearl for a moment. The pearl represents the church. A pearl is not a stone like the diamond. It is formed by a living organism. A grain of sand or other foreign matter intrudes itself into the shell of a small sea creature. It hurts and harms it. The

response of the organism is to send out a secretion that coats over the foreign matter. That fluid builds up until a pearl is formed -- not a ruby or a diamond, but a beautiful white pearl. A pearl is not like other gems. It cannot be cut to enhance its beauty. It is formed intact. The minute you cut it, you ruin it.

The pearl was never considered very valuable by the Israelites. Several verses of Scripture give us this impression. For example, in [Job 28:18](#) pearls are classed with coral. Although the pearl was not considered valuable among the Hebrews, it was very valuable to the Gentiles. When Christ used the figure of "goodly pearls" ([v. 45](#)), I imagine that His disciples wondered why. Oriental people gave to the pearl a symbolic meaning of innocence and purity, fit only for kings and potentates.

With this information in our thinking, let's look again at the parable.

Christ came to this earth as the merchantman. He saw man in sin, and He took man's sin and bore it in His own body. Our sin was an intrusion upon Him -- it was that foreign matter. And He was made sin for us. As someone has put it, I got into the heart of Christ by a spear wound. Christ ". . . was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . ." ([Isa. 53:5](#)).

Notice Christ's response to the sinner. He puts around us His own righteousness. He covers us with His own white robe of righteousness. ". . . we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus . . ." ([Eph. 2:10](#)). Christ sees us, not as we are now but as we shall be someday, presented to Him as ". . . a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" ([Eph. 5:27](#)). Christ sold all that He had in order that He might gain the church. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)).

When we come to the last book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation, we find a description of the New Jerusalem, the future home of the church. Notice the emblem on the outside of the city -- the gates are made of pearls! That is no accident, friend; it is planned that way by Christ's design. He is the merchantman "Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

The Parable Of The Net Cast Into The Sea (13:47-50)

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the goods into vessels, but cast the bad away.

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just [[Matt. 13:47-49](#)].

"So shall it be at the end of the world" -- the word world is the Greek *aion*, meaning "age." The Bible does not teach the end of this world. It is true that time will be no more, but then eternity begins, and as far as I'm concerned, I can't tell the difference (and I have never met anyone else who could). The end of the age simply means the time when Christ will return to establish His Kingdom on earth.

And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth [[Matt. 13:50](#)].

Our Lord makes it clear in this section that it is a terrible thing to be lost.

I was very much interested in reading a scientific paper written by men who were presenting certain scientific evidence in several different fields, and their point was that science was not sure of many things. For example, they were not sure exactly what the atom blast would do. They were not sure of the consequences of germ warfare. They were not sure about the effect of the birth control pill. And many other things were mentioned. Then one of the scientists said this, "It's just like this matter of eternity. You may not know whether there is a heaven or a hell, but you had better make sure that you are going to heaven because even if you happen to be wrong, you'll be all right. But if you are wrong, it is surely going to be bad." And our Lord made it very clear that it is indeed going to be very bad.

It is considered sophisticated in our day to be a suave person. Certainly, you will not be considered a square if you deny the existence of hell. But, my friend, in reality you don't know a thing about it, do you? You may say, "Well, you don't know either." Well I know what is in this Book. And since the Bible has been accurate in everything it has predicted, and since in my own life I have proven it true, I take it for granted that it is accurate in its description of hell. And I work on that premise -- and it's more than a premise.

If you were told that a hurricane was going to hit your town, what would you do? After you had been given the information, someone might come along and say, "Oh, they warned of a hurricane ten years ago, and no hurricane came." I think you would say "Well, they might have been wrong ten years ago, but they could be right this time; so I think I'll go to a storm cellar." You would be a fool if you didn't. What about the man who rejects Christ's warning of hell? He says, "I'll take my chance." It will be too bad if he is wrong. Our Lord Jesus Himself makes this fact very clear in this parable when He says, "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The Parable Of The Householder (13:52)

Some of the people call this verse a parable and others do not. Nevertheless, the content of this single verse has an important message for us.

Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old [[Matt. 13:52](#)].

This is a very personal verse, especially for those of us who teach and preach the Word of God. I am to bring forth both the old and new. Some folk say to me, "Oh, I've heard all of that before." Of course they have. But it is my business to bring forth old things, and I do hope to bring forth a few new thoughts, also.

Jesus Returns To His Own Country And Is Rejected (13:54-58)

After teaching these parables, the Lord Jesus departed and headed toward Nazareth, His hometown.

And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? [[Matt. 13:54](#)].

Let me call your attention again to the fact that in Christ's day they never questioned whether or not He could perform miracles. Their question was, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" Where does He get His wisdom, and how can He do these mighty works?

Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? [[Matt. 13:55](#)].

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" That was what confused them. They did not recognize who He really was. To them He was just a carpenter's son. And that is all He is to some folk in our day. They think He was a great teacher, a great man, a wonderful person, but to them He was only a carpenter's son.

And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? [[Matt. 13:56](#)].

It is obvious that the Lord Jesus had brothers and sisters -- of course, they were half brothers and half sisters, younger than He was, and born of Mary and Joseph. They did not understand until after His resurrection that He was truly the Son of God.

And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house [[Matt. 13:57](#)].

You see, His hometown folk were so familiar with Him and with His family that they were "offended in him." That is, they took offense at Him. I suppose they said, "We know His family. He grew up among us. Where does He get the things He teaches?"

And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief [[Matt. 13:58](#)].

This is a tremendous revelation. Note what it was that limited the power of God when He was here. It was unbelief! "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." It was not that He was unable to do them; but because of their unbelief, He did very few miracles there. My friend, the great problem with you and me is that we do not have faith to believe -- and I'm talking about faith for the salvation of men and women. We need the kind of faith that believes Christ can save the lost. He is limited today in your own community, in your church, in your family, and in your own life by unbelief. And this is certainly true of me also. Our Lord states a great truth here. Let's not bypass it.

Chapter 14

THEME: The forerunner, John the Baptist, is beheaded; Jesus withdraws but is followed by the multitude; He feeds the five thousand and sends His disciples over the sea into a storm, then walks on the water to them

The movement in Matthew of the rejection of Jesus as King and His conflict with the religious rulers continues. This chapter reveals that events are moving to a crisis. John the Baptist is slain on the pretext that Herod must keep his oath. This is an overt act of antagonism toward light and right which must ultimately lay wicked hands on Jesus. Jesus withdraws in order not to force the wicked hand of Herod, for the hour of Jesus has not yet come.

The feeding of the five thousand is certainly the most important of the miracles of Jesus if we are to judge by the attention given to it by the Gospel writers. It is the only miracle recorded by all the Gospel writers.

The Murder Of John The Baptist (14:1-12)

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him [[Matt. 14:1-2](#)].

If this sounds superstitious to you, you are right. It is superstitious, but it is not the superstition of the Bible nor of Jesus nor of His apostles, nor is it the superstition of Christianity. It is the superstition of old Herod and also of other ignorant people of that day. Somebody says, "Well, of course, in our contemporary society we are not superstitious like that." Aren't we? Notice how many people are following the horoscope and astrology charts. Also, religions of the Orient are having a tremendous influence in our modern culture. The human race is basically superstitious, my friend, and the minute you get away from the Word of God, you become superstitious. Even those who call themselves atheistic are turning to cults and "isms" and pagan religions, and we marvel that intelligent people could become involved in them.

The Person and the ministry of Jesus could not escape the notice of the king on the throne. Herod was a member of the family that you ought to look up in a good Bible dictionary. The whole family was a bunch of rascals and of the very darkest hue. They were the Mafia of the first century, and the Herod of this chapter was no exception.

The first several verses of this chapter are a flashback of what had already taken place. When Herod heard about the preaching of Jesus, he was immediately filled with fear and superstition. Herod had put John the Baptist to death, and he associated John with the Lord Jesus. Herod believed John had risen from the dead, and his fear changed to frenzy because he wanted to eliminate John altogether. Herod was a drunken, depraved, debased, weak man, and he was a killer. He had already murdered John, the forerunner of Christ, and he was prepared to murder the Lord Jesus Himself.

The following verses are part of the flashback describing the circumstances surrounding the death of John the Baptist.

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife [[Matt. 14:3](#)].

Notice that it says that Herod had laid hold on John -- it was a past action. Herod had imprisoned John "for Herodias' sake." Notice how Herod was influenced by others. Here it is by Herodias, and later on it will be by others. He was motivated like a politician. Everything he did was to gain the approval of others.

For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her [[Matt. 14:4](#)].

John the Baptist had spoken out against Herod's immorality -- John wasn't a very good politician!

And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet [[Matt. 14:5](#)].

Here we see that Herod was afraid of the crowd.

But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod [[Matt. 14:6](#)].

Herod was a lascivious, lustful old creature, living with his brother's wife at the time, and John the Baptist had condemned him.

Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask [[Matt. 14:7](#)].

He expected her to ask for some material thing, I suppose, and certainly something within reason.

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger [[Matt. 14:8](#)].

The mother, Herodias, lived up to the Herod name. Hers was a cruel and sadistic request, prompted by a brutal desire for revenge because of John's condemnation of her.

And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her [[Matt. 14:9](#)].

Imagine a man being motivated like that! He was afraid of what his guests might think of him for having made a promise and not making it good.

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother [[Matt. 14:10-11](#)].

The sadistic, sad, and sordid account of what took place in that day reveals the type of society that existed then. John the Baptist was beheaded, and his head was given to the dancing girl on a platter! Human nature has not changed much. Lust and murder are part of contemporary society today.

And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus [[Matt. 14:12](#)].

The disciples of John claimed his body and tenderly and lovingly buried it.

Jesus Withdraws (14:13-14)

The Lord withdrew because He knew that Herod's fear would break out into a frenzy and cause him to do something rash. The Lord Jesus knew this man and wanted to avoid an incident because His hour had not yet come.

When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities [[Matt. 14:13](#)].

The Lord went by ship across the Sea of Galilee, but the crowd that had followed Him on foot out of the cities did not want Him to leave, so they walked around the shore of Galilee and met Him on the other side. This reveals how popular He was with the crowds.

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick [[Matt. 14:14](#)].

Notice again that they brought their sick folk out to Him. He healed literally thousands of people in that day. To compare what He did to the healing cults of our day is blasphemous. It casts a reflection on Him -- because what He did was aboveboard and evident to everybody.

Jesus Feeds The Hungry (14:15-21)

And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals [[Matt. 14:15](#)].

Note that the disciples are attempting to advise Jesus what to do. Their advice was to send the people into the villages.

But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat [[Matt. 14:16](#)].

The feeding of the five thousand is the one miracle which is recorded in all four Gospels. For that reason alone it is an important miracle.

It was as if the disciples had appointed themselves to the board of directors to tell the Lord Jesus what to do. But He said to them, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." It was an impossible command.

And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes [[Matt. 14:17](#)].

Having only five loaves and two fishes is typical of the sad state of the church in our day. Right now folk are saying that we need to send the multitudes away, that there are natural ways of caring for their needs. We send them to the psychiatrist for emotional help and to

the government for physical relief. We do have spiritual bread to offer folk, although it may be only five loaves and two fishes, but the thing which is lacking is the power of the Lord Jesus. If we only had that power, we wouldn't need to send the multitudes away. We fail to realize that the solutions today are not in government nor in human imaginations but in God. No wonder the church is powerless.

He said, Bring them hither to me [[Matt. 14:18](#)].

I love that response! He is the Lord, my friend, and He says to us, "Bring what you have to Me." It is not what we have that counts with Him but actually what we don't have. The question is: Are we willing to release whatever we do have and let Him be the One to direct us in the disposition of it?

Don't get the impression that this little boy had five great big loaves of bread. They actually were little buns. There were over five thousand hungry people out there, and they had five little buns. This little boy had brought them -- they were probably his lunch, and he could have eaten every bit of it. Five loaves and two small fish -- and Jesus said, "Bring them hither to me."

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude [[Matt. 14:19](#)].

"He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass." Someone has called our attention to something interesting here which most of us would have passed by. In Mark's account we are told that He made them sit down by companies or ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. These folk wore colorful clothing, and out there on the green grass they were seated probably by villages with each having its own distinct manner of dress. It must have been a thrilling sight to have seen this colorful group from the opposite hillside. They were probably wearing red, brown, blue, orange, and purple -- probably a great deal of purple because purple dye was made in this area. It must have looked like one of those old-fashioned quilts. The Lord had them sit in order. The Lord did things orderly.

"And looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." These fellows who had appointed themselves to the board of directors in telling the Lord Jesus what to do find themselves now as waiters, serving the crowd. And that is really to be the particular ministry of apostles, disciples, ministers, evangelists, and all Christians in our day. We are to feed the multitude. There are too many people in our churches who want to tell how it should be done and too few who are willing to do it. A preacher said to me, "In my church we have all chiefs and no Indians. Everybody wants to be the head of something, chairman of a committee, or in another place of leadership." What the church needs is waiters to give out the Bread of Life, and the Bread is the Word of God. That's our business. All believers should be waiters passing it out.

And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full [[Matt. 14:20](#)].

I formerly thought that taking up the "fragments" meant that they picked up what we would call the garbage; that is, someone bit into a sandwich, then put it down when he saw a bigger one, and the half-eaten sandwich would be a fragment. However, I realize now that here were twelve baskets of bread and fish which were never touched. It is difficult for us who live in the midst of supermarkets to understand that many of the world's population went to bed hungry last night. Most people in that day never knew what it was to have a full meal, but twelve baskets of food left over indicates that everyone had a full tummy.

And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children [[Matt. 14:21](#)].

There were five thousand men. This did not include the women and children. Is it too much to add one woman and one child to each man? The Lord actually fed closer to fifteen thousand than to five thousand people that day.

Jesus Walks On The Water (14:22-36)

As soon as the multitude was fed, Jesus sent his disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and He went to pray.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away [[Matt. 14:22](#)].

"Straightway" is a word of urgency and swift movement. Matthew's record has a strange omission at the conclusion of the miracle of feeding the five thousand. He notes the urgency with which Jesus dismissed the multitudes and the haste in which He sent His disciples over the sea in the boat; however, he does not offer an explanation. John gives us the reason: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" ([John 6:15](#)). In view of the fact that Matthew is presenting that phase of the ministry of Jesus which has to do with His kingship, it may appear odd at first that he would ignore this attempt to make Jesus king. This is another evidence of the remarkable character of the claim of Jesus to be King. He is King by right and title. He will not become King by any democratic process. He is not "elected" King by the will of the people. He is King by the will of God. He will finally become King by force (see [Ps. 2:8-9](#)).

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary [[Matt. 14:23-24](#)].

The Lord is in the mountains, in the place of prayer. The disciples are down on the Sea of Galilee in a storm and in darkness; they are in the place of peril. What a picture this is of our own day. Our Lord has gone on to the Father and is seated at the Father's right hand. We today are down here on a storm-tossed sea in the place of peril.

I love this next verse --

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea [[Matt. 14:25](#)].

The fourth watch is the morning watch, from three in the morning until daylight. This is the time the Lord walked on the sea, going to His disciples. And I think that will be the watch in which He will come for us at the Rapture. Christ is the bright and morning star for the church, and He will take the church out of the world. We don't know the date of His coming. There are men who would have us believe that they know the time, but they don't know. However, I believe that we are in the fourth watch of the night.

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear [[Matt. 14:26](#)].

This is the picture: Our Lord is up there on the mountain, and He sees the disciples in the storm, toiling and rowing, as Mark's record has it. Then He comes to them in the fourth watch. When they see Him, they say, "It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." Somebody is going to say, "Well, they were superstitious." Yes, there may have been a certain amount of superstition in them, but what would you think if a man came to you walking on the water? Many years ago over in Tennessee a fellow said, "I didn't believe in ghosts either until I saw one!" And that is the position of the disciples. They had never seen a spirit before, but they think they are seeing one now!

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid [[Matt. 14:27](#)].

"Straightway Jesus spake unto them" -- that is, immediately He reassured them that He was no ghost!

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water [[Matt. 14:28](#)].

Peter has certainly been criticized for this. They say that he should not have asked to walk on water. Well, I rather admire the man. William Carey said, "Expect great things of God, and attempt great things for God." Certainly Peter did that! I am afraid that most of us are satisfied with little things from God.

Notice that Jesus did not rebuke Peter for asking --

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus [[Matt. 14:29](#)].

I hear people say that Peter failed to walk on the water, but that is not the way my Bible reads. My Bible says that Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. This is not failure! Peter asked a tremendous thing of God. No wonder God used him in such a wonderful way during the days that followed. No wonder he was chosen to preach the sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me [[Matt. 14:30](#)].

Peter took his eyes off the Lord Jesus while he was walking on the water. When he began to sink, he prayed the shortest prayer in the Bible, "Lord, save me"! If Simon Peter had prayed this prayer like some of us preachers pray, "Lord, Thou who are omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent . . .," Peter would have been twenty-nine feet under water before he would have gotten to his request. Peter got right down to business, and you and I need to pray like that.

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him,
and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou
doubt? [[Matt. 14:31](#)].

Peter's problem was that he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the waves rolling. You and I are in a world today where we see the waves rolling, and this is the time when we need to keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying,
Of a truth thou art the Son of God [[Matt. 14:32-33](#)].

Our Lord performed this miracle for His own, that they might be brought into the place of faith. Even Simon Peter, who was audacious enough to say, "Lord, bid me come unto thee on the water" and actually walked on the water, which should have cemented his faith, got his eyes off Jesus, and his faith failed. I don't want to criticize Peter because that has been my problem, also. I have stepped out on faith many times and then have taken my eyes off Him. This is the tragedy of the hour for us in our day. But these things were done that the disciples might worship Him and know that He was the Son of God.

And when they were gone over, they came into the land of
Gennesaret.

And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent
out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that
were diseased;

And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his
garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole
[[Matt. 14:34-36](#)].

After the storm He continued to minister to the needs of the people. Again, let me call your attention to the multitudes that were healed in that day. We have a detailed record of only a few healings, but thousands were made whole by the Lord.

Chapter 15

THEME: Jesus denounces scribes and Pharisees; rebukes His disciples; heals the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman and multitudes; feeds the four thousand

This chapter continues the movement of the King, and He is beginning now to move toward the Cross. We have already seen His rejection and conflict with the religious rulers. This chapter advances the ministry of Jesus to the very breaking point with the scribes and Pharisees. There is a lot of action here.

Jesus Denounces The Scribes And Pharisees (15:1-20)

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread [[Matt. 15:1-2](#)].

The scribes and the Pharisees had come all the way from Jerusalem. In the previous chapter we saw that Jesus and His disciples were way out in a desert place where the crowds couldn't even get to a hamburger stand; so He had fed them. On the surface it may seem like a wonderful thing that the religious rulers had come all the way out to listen to Him. Well, frankly, they hadn't come all the way out to applaud Him or to accept His teaching; they had come to criticize Him. Immediately we recognize that this was not a friendly visit. They did not accuse Him of breaking the Scriptures but of violating the traditions which they considered to be on a par with the Scriptures. They wanted to know why His disciples did not wash their hands. They were referring to a ceremonial cleansing rather than to what we would consider a physical or sanitary washing. There are a great many people who feel that if you go through some sort of an outward ceremony and clean up on the outside, this is all that is necessary.

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? [[Matt. 15:3](#)].

Jesus accuses them of breaking the commandment of God with their tradition. Their tradition, you see, permitted a man to disobey the Law, an amazing thing -- and they had a very clever way of doing it.

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition [[Matt. 15:4-6](#)].

Our Lord is saying that honoring father and mother includes supporting them. The way they got around that responsibility was to dedicate their money as a gift to God, and that would relieve them of supporting their parents. This gave a pious way out for a man to break the Mosaic Law.

I still believe the best way to test a Christian is by his pocketbook. The barometer of the Christian today is how he handles his own money and how he handles God's money. The religious rulers of Jesus' day were helping men escape their responsibility.

I am of the opinion that God wants you to pay your honest debts before you give to Him. God wants you to take care of your personal responsibilities. He wants you to support your family before you give to Him. I once knew a man with a wild idea. This man came to me on payday and wanted to give me half his income while his family went hungry. When I found out, we had quite a little talk, and at first he was offended. Finally, he saw

that he was neglecting his own family, which is a tragic thing to do. It is amazing how people try to escape a responsibility in a pious way.

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me [[Matt. 15:7-8](#)].

The Lord called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites. This is the most frightful word in Scripture. Nothing quite corresponds to it, but it did not have quite the meaning in that day that it does today. To us it is a scorching word, but in Jesus' day it simply meant to answer back and was used of an actor in a play. It means that an actor would receive a cue and then answer back. Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of playing at religion.

The religious leaders were eager to have people go through the ceremony of washing their hands, but they ignored the condition of the heart, which was the important thing to God. In a very pious way they were breaking the Mosaic Law.

My friend, we also are pretty good at rationalizing. Parents say to their children, "You wash your hands before you come to the table," but they pay no attention to what their children see on television, which is the thing that is damaging the heart. Oh, of course, children should wash their hands, but what is on the inside is far more important.

Now our Lord will enlarge upon that statement --

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man [[Matt. 15:10-11](#)].

The great principle that Jesus was teaching is that moral defilement is spiritual, not physical.

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? [[Matt. 15:12](#)].

The disciples are amazed that the Lord would offend the Pharisees. Up to this point there has been conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus, but this is the breaking point. The Lord continues to instruct His disciples.

But he answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up [[Matt. 15:13](#)].

The word plant here means "system". It is not too broad to interpret Jesus as saying, "Every religious system which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch [[Matt. 15:14](#)].

This to me is a humorous statement, and it is certainly biting sarcasm. The Pharisees were the blind leaders.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable [[Matt. 15:15](#)].

The Lord has been speaking in parables to His disciples, but they had not gotten His point yet.

And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man [[Matt. 15:16-18](#)].

This is a great principle. A person is not defiled by what goes into his mouth but by what comes out of his mouth. As someone has well said, what is in the well of the heart will come up in the bucket of the mouth sooner or later. Listen to Him --

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man [[Matt. 15:19-20](#)].

We are certainly seeing this working out in our contemporary culture. We are in the period of the "new morality" and have reached the day that Isaiah talked about when he said that they would ". . . call evil good, and good evil . . ." ([Isa. 5:20](#)). Those of us who believe the Bible are considered squares and entirely wrong. What do we have in this day of freedom, now that the lid has been taken off and man expresses what is in his heart? Do we have a new morality? No, we have the same old things -- evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, false witness, blasphemy, and thefts. We have really opened a Pandora's box, and we are in trouble.

Man has to be controlled. He is the most vicious animal on earth. We put other animals in cages, but man must be free to do his thing, and our Lord has told us what mankind will do, and He says that these things defile. All about us today is an emphasis on sex -- in our schools, even in our churches, on television, on radio; it stares at you from billboards, from the covers of magazines, from newspaper headlines. My friend, these things defile. Don't tell me that you are immune to it; no one is immune to this type of thing. Our children and young people are being defiled -- all in the lofty-sounding terminology of freedom of speech! The things that are in the heart are now coming out. Our Lord has made a tremendous statement here.

Jesus Heals The Syrophenician Woman's Daughter (15:21-28)

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon [[Matt. 15:21](#)].

Now our Lord leaves the land of Israel for the first time during His public ministry. This is interesting because He came to Israel as her King. When He sent His disciples out, He instructed them to go into the cities of Israel but not beyond her boundaries. Then the Lord was rejected by Israel, and there arose conflict. The breaking point between Jesus and the religious rulers came only a few verses ago. What happens? Jesus Himself steps

over the boundaries of Israel and lays down another great principle. He will now receive the Gentiles. His invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest [lit., "rest you"]" ([Matt. 11:28](#)).

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us [[Matt. 15:22-23](#)].

The Syrophoenician woman was a mixture of several races and a true Gentile (see [Mark 7:26](#) for her nationality). She had no claim on Jesus as the Son of David, and when she addressed Him as such, He answered her not a word.

The disciples said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." She was causing a disturbance and probably a little embarrassment.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel [[Matt. 15:24](#)].

This seems to be a harsh statement, but it was a statement of fact. Jesus was offering Himself first as the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the coming of the King in David's line. He was forcing this gentile woman to recognize that fact.

Jesus came as King of the Jews. You mark that down -- it was the primary issue that had to be settled. He died with this superscription written over Him on the Cross: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Now listen to this gentile woman --

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me [[Matt. 15:25](#)].

When she addressed Him as the Son of David, He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She as a Gentile had no claim upon Him as the Son of David. However, now she comes and worships Him, calling Him "Lord", and asks for help. Now she will get help, as we shall see.

But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs [[Matt. 15:26](#)].

That is a very strong statement! Such a rebuff would have driven many of us away. We would have turned on our heels and said, "You can't talk to us like that!"

And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table [[Matt. 15:27](#)].

You remember that our Lord told of a poor man who ate of the crumbs that fell from a rich man's table, and the dogs came and licked his sores. The Israelites used the word dog in reference to the Gentiles. This woman was willing to bear that reproach because she believed in the Lord Jesus.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour [[Matt. 15:28](#)].

Our Lord really marveled at the faith of this gentile woman. He had said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden -- I'll help you; I'll lift your burden," and that is what He did even for a Canaanite. Her answer had revealed a great faith, and to that our Lord responded.

Jesus Continues To Heal (15:29-31)

And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them [[Matt. 15:29-30](#)].

Again I call your attention to the multitudes of folk whom Jesus healed. There were not just a few isolated cases that could not be substantiated, but there were so many that nobody denied He performed miracles of healing.

Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel [[Matt. 15:31](#)].

Jesus Feeds The Four Thousand (15:32-39)

This miracle seems to be almost a duplication of the feeding of the five thousand.

Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way [[Matt. 15:32](#)].

Note again His compassion for people.

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? [[Matt. 15:33](#)].

Let's not miss the message that is here. Frankly, it seems like just a rerun of the feeding of the five thousand. It appears to be a repetition, and we wonder why Matthew included it since it doesn't seem to add any further advancement of the messianic claims of the Lord Jesus. However, we are in the section in which the emphasis is no longer upon Jesus pressing His messianic claim but the emphasis is on the rejection of His claim. And this miracle shows how slow the disciples were to learn. They had already witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, and I think it took place only a few days before this; yet here they raise the same old objections of unbelief. Again His disciples say to Him, "Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?"

And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude [[Matt. 15:34-36](#)].

Again He fed the multitudes. This is a revelation that the disciples had not really learned the lesson. Their reluctance to believe actually constitutes a form of rejection. My friend, unbelief is sin. In [Romans 14:23](#) it says that ". . . whatsoever is not of faith is sin." In [Hebrews 12:1](#) we are admonished to ". . . lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. . . ." What is that weight? I think it is unbelief. Unbelief is sin. I am willing to make this confession: I wish that I believed Him more. He is worthy to be believed; I ought to believe Him fully, but the problem is with me. And I suspect that the problem is with you, also.

The Lord Jesus fed the multitude --

And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children [[Matt. 15:37-38](#)].

Notice that it was four thousand men plus women and children. In other words, families were there. Again, if we put one woman and one child with each man, the total fed would be twelve thousand.

And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala [[Matt. 15:39](#)].

This was part of the Lord's Galilean ministry. Magdala is on the Sea of Galilee and today lies in ruins.

This chapter reveals that our Lord's disciples are not keeping up. They are slow to believe and slow to understand. This is actually hindering the Lord Jesus. It seems at this point that, since He has reached the breaking point with the religious rulers, He is having a real problem with His disciples. He appears to be just marking time until they catch up.

Frankly, He is very patient with you and me, also. Many of us need to catch up; we are far behind in our belief and understanding. Oh, that we might believe Him!

Chapter 16

THEME: Jesus continues the conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees; Jesus calls for a confession from His disciples, and Peter speaks for the group; Jesus confronts them for the first time with the church, His death and resurrection

The Pharisees And Sadducees Ask For A Sign (16:1-4)

For the second time the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign from heaven, and again they are referred to Jonah.

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? [[Matt. 16:1-3](#)].

In [Matthew 12:38](#) the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign. At that time the Lord gave them the sign of Jonah. He is going to do that again, but first He calls their attention to the fact that, although they are very good at predicting the weather, they don't seem to be able to recognize the signs of the times.

Actually, the religious rulers are trying to trap the Lord Jesus, and He is going to warn His own men to beware of them. Notice that this is the second time He calls them "O ye hypocrites."

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed [[Matt. 16:4](#)].

Our Lord had provided them with many signs, but they would not accept them. For the second time He predicts the sign of Jonah ("Jonas" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Jonah). Back in chapter 12 verse 40 He had said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." These Pharisees and Sadducees were not about to accept that as a sign.

In this chapter we will see three viewpoints concerning Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees consider Him an imposter and do not believe that He is the Messiah. The multitude thinks He is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. In this, they were complimentary, although they missed the mark completely. His disciples present the third viewpoint. They believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were asking for a sign. Jesus said that no sign would be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah. "And he left them and departed." There is a note of finality in His action as He turns and walks away from them. Then He warns His disciples of the leaven of these religious rulers.

Jesus Warns His Disciples (16:5-12)

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread [[Matt. 16:5-7](#)].

In [Matthew 13](#) we learned that leaven is always a principle of evil and never a principle of good. The Lord says to beware of the leaven. If you are cautioned to beware of something, it will not be welcome or good. The disciples missed the understanding of the leaven at first, thinking it was bread.

Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees [[Matt. 16:8-12](#)].

If it were a matter of material bread, the disciples should have remembered the two miracles of His -- providing food for the five thousand and the four thousand -- but it was not a matter of material bread. Leaven, according to our Lord's interpretation, is false doctrine. It is that which is evil. When people speak about the "leaven of the gospel," they are using a contradiction of terms. Leaven is never a picture of the gospel. Leaven always is symbolic of evil. If you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as an authority, this ought to clarify once and for all what leaven represents.

Jesus Calls For A Confession Of Himself (16:13-20)

All the way through the Gospel of Matthew we need to keep our thinking caps on because this Gospel is the key to the rest of the Scriptures. We need to make sharp distinctions and note carefully what happens.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? [[Matt. 16:13](#)].

If you look on a map, you will find three Caesareas. Caesarea Philippi is located to the north of the Sea of Galilee. The Lord Jesus is in the north, and He is in a position from which He is going to turn and begin a movement directly toward Jerusalem and the Cross. Before He begins that journey, there are two things that must be clear in the minds of His disciples: (1) who He is, and (2) what He is going to do. My friend, these are the two things that all of us have to be clear on in order to be Christians. We have to know who He is, and we have to know what He did. We need to know these things in order that we might exercise faith and be saved.

Note our Lord's first question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" This is a question which He is still asking, and it is a question that is still being answered in our day. He still is the most controversial Person who has ever lived on the topside of this earth. Now we will hear the viewpoint of the multitudes, the crowds that followed Him. I believe that if you or I asked this question on a street corner of our own towns, we would probably get similar answers because folk are still confused about Him.

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets [[Matt. 16:14](#)].

"Some say that thou art John the Baptist." John the Baptist was a great man, and the people recognized him as such. In our day there are many folk who say that Jesus was a great teacher.

Some said regarding Jesus that He was "Elias". (The name Elias was the Greek form of "Elijah".) Elijah was certainly a great person, and there are those in our day who say that Jesus was a great person.

"And others, Jeremias." (Again, the Greek form is used.) Jeremiah was the weeping prophet, and the people saw our Lord weep. The crowds gave Him the credit for being a great prophet.

"Or one of the prophets." I suppose there was a variety of viewpoints as to which prophet Jesus was.

These, then, were the viewpoints of the average persons of that day.

A young preacher friend of mine, an extrovert, heard me speak of this; so he went out on the street corners and asked the question concerning Jesus Christ of folk who passed by. He got all sorts of viewpoints. Some said that He was the greatest teacher this world has ever seen. One person said that He was a founder of religion. Another felt that He was a good man. Another put Him in a class with other men who were famous in history -- just "one of the prophets," you see.

Now the Lord Jesus turns to His apostles and asks them --

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God [[Matt. 16:15-16](#)].

The time has come for the disciples to make a decision and render a confession. Simon Peter was evidently the spokesman for the group. He said, "Thou art the Christ," which meant the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One who was predicted in the Old Testament, and the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment. Also -- "the Son of the living God." Up to this point, that was the best confession and the highest tribute that could be made to Him. This is who Jesus is!

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 16:17](#)].

Only the Holy Spirit can make Christ known to any person. No man today can call Jesus "Lord" but by the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and reveal them to us. Jesus said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee"; that is, "You didn't learn it by being with Me." I hear folk say, "Well, if I could have been with Jesus for three years [the apostles had been with Him about two and one half years now], then I would really know who He is." Would you? My friend, you can know Him just as well today because the Spirit of God has to make Him real to you.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [[Matt. 16:18](#)].

Let us look at this verse carefully. On what rock did Jesus build His church? There are those who say that it was built on Simon Peter. Well, obviously it was not, because there is a play upon words here. In the original Greek it is, "Thou art Petros [a little piece of rock], and upon this petra [bedrock] I will build my church." There are others who hold that Christ is building His church upon the confession that Simon Peter made. I don't agree with that at all.

Who is the Rock? The Rock is Christ. The church is built upon Christ. We have Simon Peter's own explanation of this. In [1Peter 2:4](#), referring to Christ, he writes, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." And he remembers [Isaiah 28:16](#), ". . . Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" ([1Pet. 2:6](#)). The church is built upon Christ; He is the foundation. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1Cor. 3:11](#)). Christ is the stone, and He says on this rock He will build His church. The church was still future when the Lord made this statement. And please don't tell me there was a church in the Old Testament because the church did not come into existence until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There could not have been a church until all of these things had taken place. "I will build my church" -- this was future.

The "gates of hell" refers to death. The word used for hell is the Greek word hades, the sheol of the Old Testament, which refers to the unseen world and means "death." The gates of death shall not prevail against Christ's church. One of these days the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. That shout will be like the voice of an archangel and like a trumpet because the dead in Christ are to be raised. The gates of death shall not prevail against His church.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [[Matt. 16:19](#)].

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Were they given only to Simon Peter? No, Jesus gives them to those who make the same confession made by Peter, those who know Christ as Savior. If you are a child of God, you have the keys as well as any person has the keys. The keys were the badge of authority of the office of the scribes who interpreted the Scriptures to the people (see [Neh. 8:2-8](#)). Every Christian today has the Scriptures and, therefore, the keys. If we withhold the Word, we "bind on earth"; if we give the

Word, we "loose on earth." No man or individual church has the keys -- to the exclusion of all other believers. We have a responsibility today to give out the gospel because it is the only thing that can save people. This is a tremendous revelation. Who is sufficient for these things? You and I have a responsibility that is awesome indeed!

Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ [[Matt. 16:20](#)].

The Lord made this request because the mere knowledge of who He is will not save you. To find salvation you must know who He is and what He did and accept Him by faith.

Jesus Announces His Death And Resurrection (16:21-28)

For the first time the Lord Jesus announces to His disciples His death and resurrection. The time was approximately six months before He was actually crucified. Why did He wait so long to make such an important announcement? Obviously, His disciples were not prepared for it, even at this time, judging from their reaction. He repeated five times the fact that He was going to Jerusalem to die ([Matt. 17:12](#); [Matt. 17:22-23](#); [Matt. 20:18-19](#); [Matt. 20:28](#)). In spite of this intensive instruction, the disciples failed to grasp the significance of it all until after His resurrection.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day [[Matt. 16:21](#)].

This is what the Lord Jesus did for you and me. This is the gospel: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and raised again. You must know who He is. You must know what He did for you. If you know these two things, and by faith believe and receive them, you are saved. This had never been revealed before except to Nicodemus at the beginning of our Lord's ministry in [John 3:1-16](#).

Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee [[Matt. 16:22](#)].

In essence Peter said, "You are the Messiah; You are the Son of God. You must not, You cannot go to the cross!" The cross was not in the thinking of the apostles at all, as you can see.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men [[Matt. 16:23](#)].

It is satanic for anyone to deny the facts of the gospel which are that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead. It is satanic when a man in the pulpit will deny these truths. The substitutionary death of Christ is the only thing that can save us, my friend. Later on Peter wrote this: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" ([1Pet. 2:24](#)). My, what a transformation had taken place in the mind of Peter!

Our Lord said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Imagine this: Here is Peter by whom the Spirit of God could say that Jesus was the Son of God, and yet he could in the next moment let Satan deceive him!

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me [[Matt. 16:24](#)].

Many people interpret this verse, "Let him deny himself ice cream" or "Let him deny himself some luxury down here." What this verse says is "Let him deny himself!" You already know that the hardest person in the world to deny is yourself. To deny myself dessert is hard enough, but to deny myself is difficult indeed. To deny myself is to put self out of the picture and to put Christ in the place of self.

"And take up his cross, and follow me." We are not to take up Christ's Cross but our own cross. There is a cross for you and a cross for me -- that is, if we are going to follow Him.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works [[Matt. 16:25-27](#)].

The person who will not assume the risks involved in becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ will, in the long run, lose his life eternally. The opposite is also true. At Christ's second coming all accounts will be settled and everyone will receive his proper rewards.

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom [[Matt. 16:28](#)].

This verse belongs with chapter 17 because the account of the transfiguration of Jesus explains what He meant when He made this statement.

Chapter 17

THEME: The Transfiguration; the demon-possessed boy and the faithless disciples; Jesus pays taxes by performing a miracle

The Transfiguration (17:28-13)

As we noted at the conclusion of chapter 16, the final verse belongs to this chapter because it explains what our Lord meant when He made this statement:

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom [[Matt. 16:28](#)].

This was fulfilled for the apostles in the transfiguration of Jesus. The Transfiguration is that picture of the Son of man coming in His Kingdom. Someone may say, "Can you be sure that the Lord Jesus had reference to His coming Transfiguration?" Well, Simon Peter was one of the apostles who was present at the Transfiguration, and in his second epistle he wrote of that experience: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" ([2Pet. 1:16-18](#)). How was Jesus' statement fulfilled for the apostles in that day? When the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of His disciples present, this statement was fulfilled. The Transfiguration was a miniature picture of the Kingdom, and Simon Peter confirmed this for us.

The other Gospels give the account of the Transfiguration, with the exception of the Gospel of John. This leads me to say something that may startle you. The Transfiguration does not prove, nor set forth, the deity of Christ. It sets forth the humanity of Christ. The Gospel of John emphasizes the deity of Christ and therefore omits the account of the Transfiguration, although the other three Gospels record it.

The transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in my judgment, not only the proof of His humanity but the hope of humanity. The Man whom you see glorified there, transfigured, is the kind of person that you, my friend, will be someday if you are a child of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)). The glorious prospect of being like Christ is before every man.

The Lord Jesus Christ was glorified before His death and resurrection, and this is the picture which is given to us here. You will find that the Gospel of Luke presents details which neither Matthew nor Mark include, because Dr. Luke is the one who sets forth the perfect humanity of Jesus.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother,
and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the
sun, and his raiment was white as the light [[Matt. 17:1-2](#)].

"His face did shine as the sun." The light shone from within Him rather than upon Him from the outside like a spotlight. At this point let me make the suggestion that perhaps it was this sort of thing that clothed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before their fall. After they sinned, they discovered that they were naked. The implication is that they were not naked before, which leads me to believe that they were clothed with this type of light. And it was the humanity of Jesus that was transfigured. The Transfiguration sets forth His perfect humanity.

The word transfigured is a very interesting word. It is the word metamorphosis, which means "a change of form or structure." The little woolly caterpillar will someday become a beautiful butterfly by the process of metamorphosis. This body that I have today, filled

with infirmity and cancer, will someday be transfigured, and even those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be changed, transfigured. This is the hope of humanity.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him [[Matt. 17:3](#)].

Moses was the representative of the Law, and Elijah was the representative of the prophets. Moses had died, and Elijah had departed from this world in a chariot of fire. Luke tells us they were discussing Jesus' decease in Jerusalem -- "And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" ([Luke 9:30-31](#)). The Law and the prophets bore testimony to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias [[Matt. 17:4](#)].

Simon Peter could never resist an opportunity to make a speech. Every occasion was an auspicious one for him. He generally got to his feet to say something, and usually it was to say the wrong thing -- that is, until the Day of Pentecost. But here it is the wrong thing; he should have kept quiet. God Himself rebukes him, as we shall see, because he was attempting to place Moses and Elijah on the same plane with the Lord Jesus. Luke offers the explanation for this indiscretion of Peter's by stating, ". . . not knowing what he said" ([Luke 9:33](#)). And there are a lot of folk who talk without knowing what they are saying! Peter was rebuked. He should have kept still.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him [[Matt. 17:5](#)].

This is God the Father's testimony to Jesus, the Son. Jesus is the final authority in matters of revelation. What Moses, Elijah and the prophets had to say was wonderful. The writer to the Hebrews says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . ." ([Heb. 1:1-2](#)). The Son is the One who came to earth as the final revelation of God to man.

Now notice this great statement by the Father -- "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Have you ever heard a voice out of heaven commending you and saying that God was well pleased with you? Well, He has never said that to me either. In fact, He has never said it to anyone but this One. The Lord Jesus is the only One who ever has been well pleasing to God. And you and I well never get into God's presence until we are in Christ by faith. When we receive Christ as our Savior, then we are placed in the body of believers. Christ is the only One in whom God has been pleased, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only [[Matt. 17:6-8](#)].

Do you want a good motto for your life? I suggest these two words: Jesus only. He is the One who is the authority. I hope you will mark those two words, Jesus only, in your Bible. They provide a good motto for all of us.

And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead [[Matt. 17:9](#)].

Why wait until the Resurrection to tell it, and why should it be told at that time? Because it is part of the gospel story. It tells who Jesus is. He is the perfect Lamb of God. He has been tested for three years, and at this time He is on the way to the Cross to die for the sins of the world. You see, God required a lamb without blemish, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who could die a substitutionary death for mankind, because He was sinless. In His perfect humanity He was transfigured. He is the hope of mankind.

The hope of mankind is not in science or education. Both of them are letting us down today. They have created Frankenstein monsters, and we don't know what to do with them. For example, they have invented a little gasoline buggy in Detroit, Michigan, that is giving us a lot of trouble by polluting the air and clogging all the highways. Science cannot solve the problem. Believe me, friend, the hope of the world just happens to be in a person by the name of Jesus Christ. Be sure you know Him; He is your only hope.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? [[Matt. 17:10](#)].

Now this is a remarkable statement --

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things [[Matt. 17:11](#)].

Jesus confirms what was said in the prophecy of Malachi.

But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them [[Matt. 17:12](#)].

This raises a question in the minds of a great many folk regarding John the Baptist. Was he really Elijah? We have covered the same problem in [Matthew 11](#). What our Lord is doing in this chapter is trying to forestall the argument that Jesus had to die on the cross because John the Baptist was not Elijah -- and Elijah has to come before Christ returns to establish His Kingdom. Our Lord is saying that if they would receive Him as King, John would be Elijah. Don't ask me how that could be -- I am only telling you what the Scriptures teach.

"Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them" -- this is the second time the Lord Jesus mentions His approaching crucifixion.

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist [[Matt. 17:13](#)].

The Demon-possessed Boy (17:14-21)

In this scene we have a Kingdom-of-Heaven situation, as it is in today's world. Where does the church fit into it? Go with me now to the foot of the mountain where the other disciples (who were not with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration) are really in trouble.

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him [[Matt. 17:14-16](#)].

This was probably the worst case which had been brought to the attention of Jesus. It was also a sad situation because the disciples were impotent. This is a picture of the church today in a world that is demon-possessed and has gone crazy. Why is the church impotent in this crazy world? Because it doesn't have enough psychology or enough methods or enough money? It has all of those things, but they are not what the church really needs.

This man had to say to Jesus, "I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him."

Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me [[Matt. 17:17](#)].

"O faithless and perverse generation" would be His word to the church in our day and probably individually to you and to me. "Bring him hither to me." Jesus is the Great Physician. Take your case to Him, my friend.

And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour [[Matt. 17:18](#)].

The Lord rebuked His disciples, and then He rebuked the demon. This is probably the worst case of demon possession our Lord dealt with.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you [[Matt. 17:19-20](#)].

"Nothing shall be impossible unto you" -- that is, nothing that is according to the will of God for you. It was God's will that this boy be delivered from demon possession. Why couldn't the disciples deliver him? Because they didn't have the faith.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting [[Matt. 17:21](#)].

This verse is not in the better manuscripts.

Again Jesus Announces His Death And Resurrection (17:22-23)

For the third time the Lord reminds His disciples that He would die and be raised again from the dead.

And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:

And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.
And they were exceeding sorry [[Matt. 17:22-23](#)].

This is the third time He speaks to His disciples of His death and resurrection. The first time He mentioned it was when they were in Caesarea Philippi. Now He is in Galilee, on His way to Jerusalem, and He mentions it again. All that the disciples can do is to feel sorry.

Tax Money From The Fish's Mouth (17:24-27)

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? [[Matt. 17:24](#)].

"Tribute" was the assessment collected annually for the support of the temple.

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? [[Matt. 17:25](#)].

"Jesus prevented him" means that Jesus went before him.

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free [[Matt. 17:26](#)].

Jesus is trying to show Peter that just as the royal family is exempt from tax, so He, as the Son of God, would not be obligated to pay for the support of God's house.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee [[Matt. 17:27](#)].

His method of getting the tax money was certainly novel, to say the least. Now our Lord demonstrates that He has recovered all that Adam lost. The creatures were obedient to Him. The fish as well as Peter followed His command. I believe that God had given to Adam the same dominion over all creation, but he lost it at the Fall. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" ([Gen. 1:26](#)).

In the Transfiguration we see man restored to his original purpose. In the episode of the tribute money we see man restored to his original performance.

Chapter 18

THEME: The little child, the lost sheep, conduct in the coming church, and the parable on forgiveness

The next few chapters do not seem to further advance the movement in Matthew, but they do fill out many of the dark corners which have arisen because of the sudden digression in the Kingdom of Heaven due to the rejection of the King. [Matthew 13](#) in the Mystery Parables Discourse has given us the overall outline of the Kingdom of Heaven in this age, but there are still questions to be answered. These chapters are helpful in answering many of them.

Now we find that the new birth is made essential in entering the kingdom.

A Little Child Becomes An Object Lesson (18:1-10)

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? [[Matt. 18:1](#)].

I wonder if you detect a note of fleshly ambition here. It may be that I just have a critical mind, but it seems to me that these men have been talking about this subject, and maybe two or three of them felt that they could reasonably be considered the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. So the Lord did a rather sensational thing.

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them [[Matt. 18:2](#)].

What does this tell us? It tells us that the little child came to the Lord without hesitation. In [Mark 10:14](#) the Lord said, ". . . Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. . . ." The problem was not in getting the little children to come to Him but in stopping the adults from hindering the little ones in coming to the Lord. This is a lovely picture we have here. Our Lord takes this little child and puts him in the midst of them.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 18:3](#)].

This is a verse that has certainly been abused and misunderstood, but remember, the Lord Jesus is talking about conversion not reversion. Some people think this verse means that you must revert back to your childhood in some unusual fashion or that you are to become juvenile in your actions in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord is not talking about going back to a former childhood, but rather of going on to a new life. Here our Lord gives logic to the thinking of the disciples as He diverts their attention from the matter of holding an exalted place in the Kingdom to that of primary importance; namely, of first being able to secure entrance into that Kingdom. This is as radical as [John 3:3](#); "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The important thing emphasized in this verse is the new birth. You must become a little child in the sense that you must be born again. When you are born again, you start out spiritually as a child.

Unfortunately, there are many folk who do not recognize their spiritual immaturity. When I was pastoring a large city church, you would be surprised at the number of requests that came to me from so-called new converts who wanted to come and give their testimonies. I feel that it was basically the same thing as the disciples' argument as to who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord says that if you have been converted, think of your spiritual age. You are to become a little child. Should a little child get up and blabber out a testimony immediately? Should a little child be an officer in the church? In listing qualifications for the office of bishop in the church, Paul rules out the novice: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" ([1Tim. 3:6](#)). I think that our Lord is saying something like that here.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 18:4](#)].

When you go back and emphasize the entrance into the Kingdom, the new birth, then you find that the one who humbles himself as a little child is the one who is greatest in the Kingdom.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea [[Matt. 18:5-6](#)].

The word offend means "to cause to stumble"; that is, to lead into sin. Jesus warns against it in strong language! It seems to me that what He is doing in this section is making the evangelism of children a divine imperative. He gives top priority to winning the children to Christ. I commend anyone who is working with children today. There is nothing as important as that.

The story is told of Dwight L. Moody concerning his coming home one night after a meeting. His family asked him how many converts he had that night, and he said, "Two and a half." His family said, "Oh, you had two adults and one child who accepted the Lord as Savior." Moody replied, "No, no, two children and one adult accepted the Lord." He continued, "The adult was an old man and he had only half a life to give. He was just half of a convert." The little children are important.

A pastor of a Scottish church turned in his resignation years ago, and as he did so, the elders asked him why. "Well," he replied, "for this past year I've had but one convert, wee Bobby Moffat." Bobby Moffat was the man who opened up Africa to missionary work. It was the biggest year that preacher ever had! In these verses the Lord is putting a great emphasis upon children.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire [[Matt. 18:7-8](#)].

I can't think of anything more harsh than this!

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven [[Matt. 18:9-10](#)].

Our Lord says that we are not to despise one of the little ones. When one of them dies, his spirit goes immediately to be with God. All little ones go to heaven, my friend. If you have lost a little one, knowing this will be a great comfort to you. They go to heaven, not because they are innocent or because they are yours, but they go to heaven because Jesus died for them. That is what our Lord is talking about here. "Don't offend them; don't despise them. Let them come to Me. Even if they die, their spirits are going to be right there in the presence of My Father." So many parents wonder about the eternal state of their little ones.

King David knew about his. When his son by Bathsheba fell ill, he was greatly exercised about the life of the child. We have the record of this in [2Samuel 12:15-23](#). He fasted and wept and lay all night upon the earth. But when the child was dead, he arose, bathed, changed his clothes, and went into the house of God and worshiped. His servants were baffled by his actions, and David's explanation was this " . . . While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." He had the confidence that one day he would be with him. This is a very precious truth. Many people have lost little ones, and I have lost a little one, also -- my firstborn. She is buried here in Altadena in Southern California. Every now and then I go by there and put a few flowers on her grave. She's not there; she's with Him, but I go there because that is all I have left of her now. But someday, some golden tomorrow, I'm going to be there in heaven, and I am going to see my little one. She is saved. I have two children -- one in heaven and one here on earth. I confess that I have worried more about the one here than the one in heaven. I know where my firstborn is, and someday I'll go to be with her.

The feeling of our Lord about children is very important to note, especially in our day when there are so many crimes committed against these little ones. Recently, I have been reading about a mother and a stepfather who left a precious little girl along the freeway. How shocking it was to read about this. They just wanted to get rid of her. Some folk believe there is no hell, but I want to say this: If there were no hell, there ought to be one for folk like that! And there is one. Our Lord uses the strongest language possible in warning us about offenses against children.

Parable Of The Lost Sheep (18:11-14)

Now our Lord moves into the wonderful parable of the lost sheep.

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost [[Matt. 18:11](#)].

This parable is different from the parable of the lost sheep in [Luke 15](#). The key to this parable is the word save. In [Luke 15](#) the emphasis is upon finding the lost, and in [Matthew 18](#) it is upon saving the lost.

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray [[Matt. 18:12-13](#)].

Notice how He closes this -- He is still thinking in terms of the "little ones."

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish [[Matt. 18:14](#)].

He will take care of them until they get to the age of accountability, but you, parent, are responsible for leading them to Christ. I am afraid that our school systems are using our children as guinea pigs for humanistic philosophies. Young people are paying an awful price in the contemporary schoolroom. My friend, we have a tremendous responsibility before God in this area.

Pattern For Conduct In The Church (18:15-20)

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother [[Matt. 18:15](#)].

If he sins against you, you are to go to him. This verse is speaking of sin committed by a believer. The obligation is upon the one who has been injured to approach his brother who has offended him and not vice versa.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican [[Matt. 18:16-17](#)].

There are some people who like to smother trouble and cover it up. This is not the way the Lord tells us to handle it. If there is a problem between two believers, it should be worked out in an amiable, peaceful, and quiet manner. If the individuals cannot work things out, take it to a group. If the group cannot work things out, the last resort is to take the problem to the church as the final authority. The Lord says in conclusion, concerning this subject:

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [[Matt. 18:18](#)].

We have already studied the contents of this verse in [Matthew 16:19](#), where we learned that if we withhold the Word, we "bind on earth"; if we give the Word of God to others, we "loose on earth."

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them [[Matt. 18:19-20](#)].

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing." Does He mean that if we agree on anything, He will hear us? Yes, but notice the condition: "where two or three are gathered together in my name." He will hear any request which is given in Christ's name - that is, a request that Christ Himself would make. Or, we could say that asking in His name is asking in His will.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" is the simplest form of church government. As [verse 19](#) is a new basis for prayer, [verse 20](#) is the new basis for the visible church. The early church began there: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" ([Acts 2:42](#)).

Jesus' New Proviso For Forgiveness (18:21-35)

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? [[Matt. 18:21](#)].

Peter thought he was being magnanimous when he said this because two or three times was all you had to forgive according to the rabbis. Simon Peter was willing to forgive seven times. But Peter's generosity was parsimonious in comparison to the new estimation of Jesus --

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven [[Matt. 18:22](#)].

That is four hundred and ninety times! By that time, things might be pretty well worked out. If not, both of them would have reached old age to the extent that it wouldn't amount to much anyway! Four hundred and ninety times is going the limit -- and that is the point our Lord is making.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all [[Matt. 18:23-26](#)].

I guess he was saying that he wanted to pay it back on the installment plan.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt [[Matt. 18:27](#)].

I think our Lord is using an outlandish illustration here to prove His point. The amount of money that this servant owed his lord was about twelve million dollars. That is a lot of money to forgive anyone!

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest [[Matt. 18:28](#)].

"An hundred pence" amounted to about seventeen dollars! Compare that to twelve million!

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses [[Matt. 18:29-35](#)].

This parable of the servant, who was forgiven but refused to forgive another, illustrates the principle of forgiveness. This is a new principle presented in this passage, but it is not quite the basis of forgiveness for believers which is set forth in [Ephesians 4:32](#), "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Because God has forgiven us, we are to forgive each other. If God forgave our sins in the same way we forgive others, none of us would be forgiven. But after we have become children of God, because we have been forgiven, we are to forgive. This is the principle of Christian conduct, of course.

Chapter 19

THEME: Jesus enters Judea; proclaims God's standard for marriage and only grounds for divorce given; blesses little children; meets a rich young ruler; appoints the apostles to their position in the coming kingdom

In the movement in Matthew, our attention is now directed to the geography of the gospel. Jesus again enters Judea as He moves to Jerusalem for the last time before His crucifixion. There is definite intention in all that He does and says.

Jesus Re-enters Judea (19:1-2)

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan [[Matt. 19:1](#)].

"When Jesus had finished these sayings" -- what sayings? The ones we have been considering in chapters 16 -- 18. Having finished what He wanted to say in Galilee, He moved south and came into the borders of Judea, beyond Jordan, meaning the east bank of the Jordan River. The movement is in a physical and geographical sense now. Up yonder in Caesarea Philippi He announced that He was going to Jerusalem to die. He moved down into Galilee, and He spent time in that area around the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was His headquarters, and He even crossed over into Gadara. Now He is on the border of Judea.

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there [[Matt. 19:2](#)].

I want to put two words together and emphasize what has been emphasized before several times. One word is multitudes and the other word is healed. It was not just a few people that were healed; multitudes were healed. I am more and more impressed by this as time goes on. If you are going to be a faith healer, brother, you ought to go to the hospitals and empty them. That is what our Lord did when He passed by; if anyone wanted to be healed, they could be healed. Multitudes were healed!

Marriage And Divorce (19:3-12)

Now the religious rulers come to Him with a question regarding divorce. Our Lord restates God's ideal for marriage and the grounds for divorce.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? [[Matt. 19:3](#)].

The Pharisees came to tempt or to test Him. They were after Him, trying to put Him in opposition to the Mosaic system. They brought a problem which is just as difficult today as it was then. "Is it lawful for a man to put away [divorce] his wife for every cause?" That is an equally live issue among Christians in our day.

Let me preface this a little by saying that God has given to all of mankind certain things for the welfare of the human family. For instance, He has given marriage for the protection of the home. Marriage is something which God has given to be a blessing to mankind whether saved or unsaved. Another example is that of capital punishment which God gave for the protection of a nation, to protect the lives of its citizens. Also God gave the sabbath law for the protection of the individual, that he might have one day of rest. God gave these laws to protect the individual, the family, and the nation. These were

general laws which He gave to all mankind. Later on, He made them specific for His chosen people.

Now let's look at this question concerning marriage. Here it is in the smaller context of the nation Israel, of course. And we look at it today in the light of the contemporary Christian. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female [[Matt. 19:4](#)].

The Lord Jesus took them back to the very beginning, back to God's ideal of marriage.

The Mosaic Law had permitted divorce on a broad basis: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house" ([Deut. 24:1](#)).

As far as the Mosaic Law was concerned, a divorce was not as bad as was marriage to a stranger. For instance, if the priest's daughter married a stranger, she was shut out from the nation Israel. However, as time went on, the Mosaic Law was made meaningless, and the granting of divorce was done on the flimsiest pretexts, such as burning the bread. As a result, there was a great deal of discussion relative to divorce in our Lord's day.

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder [[Matt. 19:5-6](#)].

This was God's original plan for man and woman before sin entered the human family. Divorce was not in God's original plan. Why? Because sin was not in God's original plan, and divorce is always a result of sin. Regardless of what you may say, there is sin in the relationship somewhere which causes divorce. So our Lord took them back to the original plan of God.

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? [[Matt. 19:7](#)].

You ought to read [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) to get the background for their question. Why did Moses permit divorce?

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so [[Matt. 19:8](#)].

Why did Moses permit it? Because of the hardness of their hearts. You see, marriage was given to mankind, and it is the tenderest and the sweetest of human relationships. There is nothing like it. And, actually, marriage was to represent the relationship between Christ and the church. Therefore, only believers can set forth this high and holy relationship. However, when they fail, and bitterness and hardness of heart enter in, then that marriage becomes a hollow sham, and it is just a mockery of marriage. My friend, marriage is

made either in heaven or in hell -- there is no third place to make it. When marriage is made in the wrong place, it is in trouble to begin with. Even Christians find that marriage becomes a very shaky proposition.

Because of the hardness of the human heart, God permitted divorce. God is merciful to us -- oh, how merciful! But His ideal is never divorce. I recognize that we are living in a culture which is very lax in this area. There are multitudes of divorced folk who will be reading this book. Let me repeat that the background of divorce is always sin. But, after all, all of us are sinners. Since God can forgive murderers, He can also forgive divorced folk. But we need to recognize that the root cause of divorce is sin.

Now our Lord is going to give something new --

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery [[Matt. 19:9](#)].

Adultery breaks the marriage relationship and provides the one ground for divorce. Somebody says to me, "Yes, but here is this poor Christian woman, married to a drunkard!" Or a fine Christian man is married to a godless woman. What about that? Well, believers may separate on other grounds, which seems to be the whole point of [1Corinthians 7](#), but divorce is permitted on only one basis, adultery.

Divorce was granted for the purpose of permitting the innocent party to remarry. This rule is applicable only to believers; God is not regulating the lives of unbelievers but is holding them to the message of the Cross first. God wants the unbeliever to come to Christ. He is lost whether he is married, divorced, or single. It makes no difference until he accepts Christ. The important thing to note is that for believers He puts down one ground for divorce: adultery.

Now suppose there is a believer whose spouse got a divorce on another ground. What about the innocent party? Well, if there has been adultery there, and in most cases there has been, then the innocent party is permitted to remarry. I believe that is the whole thought in this particular case.

Now, there is something else here that is important --

His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry [[Matt. 19:10](#)].

The disciples are saying, "Well, in that case it would be better to stay single." Well, you would avoid a lot of trouble -- there is no question about that.

But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given [[Matt. 19:11](#)].

This is so important, especially in our day. In the verse that follows, our Lord puts down a great principle. Even now the Roman Catholic church is wrestling with this problem.

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made

eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it [[Matt. 19:12](#)].

"There are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb." There are some men and some women who do not need to marry. They get along very well by themselves, but that's not for everybody.

"And there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men." Some churches make a rule that folk in certain positions are not to marry. They have no right to do that.

"And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." I know a person who went to the mission field, and before she left, I talked to her. I said, "Look, your chances are nil for getting married out there." She said, "I have thought that through, and I am willing to make that sacrifice." She made it voluntarily.

Somebody says, "Do you think that the preacher ought to get married? Or do you think the priest should be married?" May I say to you, this is a place where God puts down a principle. He says that it is up to the individual. We have to make that decision for ourselves.

Now here is something wonderful --

Jesus Receives Little Children (19:13-15)

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence [[Matt. 19:13-15](#)].

This passage is ample basis for the salvation of children who die in infancy. It is a fact that no child will reject Jesus if He is presented to the child on a Bible basis. This is one reason why we should get the gospel message to them. Someone might say, "Wait a minute -- then everyone could be saved if we reach them as children." No, this is not true because they reach the age of accountability later. The reason for trying to get the gospel into the hearts of children is so that when they reach the age of accountability they will make a decision for Christ. It is important that this be followed through. Do not rest on the fact that your child made a decision when he was two, three, four, five, six, seven or eight years old, etc. My daughter made a decision for Christ when she was seven. Ever since that time I have asked her many times if she has really trusted the Lord as Savior. One day she said, "Daddy, why do you keep asking me that question?" I told her I just wanted to make sure. Actually, the decision will be made at the age of accountability. You say to me, "When is that age?" I don't know. I just know that it is important to get the gospel to our children. Instead of standing on a street corner and arguing about it, let's get it to them and then follow through when they reach the age of accountability by doing everything in our power to get them to trust Christ.

It is interesting that our Lord, having spoken about the issue of divorce, immediately begins to talk about children. The children are all important in any divorce. A woman once came to me wanting a divorce because she no longer loved her husband. She said, "Because of all the things he is doing, I no longer love him, and I have heard you say that when there is no love, there is no relationship. So I want to get a divorce." It is true that when there is no love there is no relationship, and that is tragic, but that is not the basis for divorce. I said to this woman, "You tell me that you don't love your husband, but do you love your children?" She said, "Of course I do, but what has that got to do with it?" I told her that it has everything to do with it. "You are to stay with him as long as you can if you love those children." My friend, the fact that our Lord said, "Let the little children come unto Me," ought to make any couple, especially a Christian couple, make every effort to hold their marriage together. A large percentage of children and young folk who are in trouble with the law come from broken homes. You would be surprised to learn the number of little ones who have been turned away from Christ because of the divorced parents. It is very significant that Jesus ties together the subject of divorce and His loving concern for little children.

The Rich Young Ruler (19:16-26)

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments [[Matt. 19:16-17](#)].

Notice how this young man approaches the Lord Jesus. He addresses Him as Good Master. He is willing to concede that He is good, and probably the enemies of Jesus would not have gone that far.

"Why callest thou me good?" I am sure you can see what our Lord was after. When He said, "There is none good but one, that is, God," He was saying in effect, "If you see that I am good, it is because I am God." He is directing his thinking so that he might accept Him as the Christ, the Son of God. Then the Lord Jesus flashed on this young man's life the commandments that have to do with a man's relationship to his fellowman.

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? [[Matt. 19:18-20](#)].

This young man could say that he had kept these commandments, and yet he recognized a lack in his life. The commandments which our Lord gave him compose the last section of the Decalogue which has to do with a man's relationship to man. The first of the Ten Commandments have to do with man's relationship to God. Our Lord did not use those

because He was leading this young man along in his thinking. However, now the Lord directs his thinking to his relationship to God --

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me [[Matt. 19:21](#)].

"If thou wilt be perfect," meaning complete. Following Jesus would have led him to see that he was not keeping the first commandments which have to do with a man's relationship to God. The Lord Jesus was on His way to the Cross. If this man followed Jesus, it would be to the foot of a cross. Something, however, was preventing him from going after the Lord. His riches were his stumbling block. For you and for me it might be something entirely different.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions [[Matt. 19:22](#)].

It was his money that was keeping him from the Lord Jesus Christ. In our day there are many things that are keeping folk away from the Lord Jesus. Riches are only one thing; there are multitudes of other things. Actually, church membership is keeping many people from Christ because it puts them into a little cellophane bag that protects them from facing their sins. They feel secure because they have been through the ceremonies or have made their confession, and yet they may be as unconverted as any pagan in the darkest spot on topside of the earth. Today, is there something that is separating you from Christ? Is there anything in the way that is keeping you from Him?

Well, it was riches for this young man --

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven [[Matt. 19:23](#)].

This is still true in our day -- not many rich, not many noble, not many of the great ones of the earth are Christians.

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God [[Matt. 19:24](#)].

Many people miss the humor that our Lord sometimes used, and this passage is an example of it. There are some people who hold to the ridiculous explanation that there was a gate in Jerusalem called "The Eye of the Needle," that a camel had to kneel to pass through it, and that therefore the Lord was saying that a man had to become humble to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Well, that misses the point altogether. Our Lord is talking about a real camel and a real needle with an eye. My friend, let me ask you a very plain question: Is it possible for a real camel to go through the eye of a real needle? I think you know the answer -- he won't make it! It is impossible. But would it be possible for God to put a camel through a needle's eye? Well, God is not in that business, but He could do it. And only God can regenerate a man. That is the point our Lord is making here. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Many people today think they are going to be saved by who they are or by what they have. You are truly saved when you find out that you are a sinner, a beggar in God's sight, with nothing to offer Him for your salvation. As long as a person feels he can do something or pay God for salvation, he can no more be saved than a camel can be put through the eye of a needle.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? [[Matt. 19:25](#)].

Listen to Jesus' answer --

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible [[Matt. 19:26](#)].

This is the explanation. As far as any person is concerned -- regardless of who you are -- you are a candidate for salvation if you recognize that you have nothing to offer God but come to Him like a beggar with empty hands. When you come to Him like that, He can save you. With God all things are possible.

Jesus Rewards His Apostle (19:27-30)

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? [[Matt. 19:27](#)].

It is easy for us to think that Simon Peter is betraying a very selfish streak here. Did our Lord rebuke him?

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel [[Matt. 19:28](#)].

Our Lord did not rebuke him. Instead, He told him what a great reward would be his. Likewise, I believe that today, we as Christians ought to be working for a reward.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first [[Matt. 19:29-30](#)].

There is to be a reward for the saved ones who have sacrificed for Jesus' sake. Many an unknown saint, of whom the world has not heard, will be given first place in His presence someday. In that day I believe that many outstanding Christian leaders who receive wide acclaim in this life will be ignored while many unknown saints of God will be rewarded. What a glorious, wonderful picture this presents to us!

Chapter 20

THEME: Parable of the laborers in the vineyard; Jesus makes the fourth and fifth announcements of His approaching death, while the mother of James and John requests the places on the right and left for her sons; Jesus opens the eyes of two blind men along the roadside

This chapter opens with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which is a continuation, begun in the last chapter, of Jesus' remarks on rewards. This chapter brings to an end the section that seems to mark time in the movement in Matthew. From this chapter on, the tempo of Matthew increases, and the Lord moves directly to the Cross. This chapter also makes an important contribution to filling in some more of the dark corners of the present state of the Kingdom of Heaven. The principle for giving rewards is stated in this parable: Faithfulness to the task, rather than the amount of work done or the spectacular nature of the work, governs the giving of rewards.

Parable Of The Laborers In The Vineyard (20:1-15)

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard [[Matt. 20:1](#)].

This parable is closely related to the previous chapter. [Matthew 19:30](#) says, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." [Verse 16](#) says, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." So you see that at both the beginning and at the end of this parable the concept of the last being first and the first, last, forms sort of a parenthesis around it.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise [[Matt. 20:2-5](#)].

The "sixth" hour was high noon, and the "ninth" hour was three o'clock in the afternoon.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? [[Matt. 20:6-15](#)].

This is a tremendous parable which illustrates an important truth: It is not the amount of time which you serve nor the prominence or importance of your position which determines your reward. Rather, you will be rewarded for your faithfulness to the task which God has given you to perform, regardless of how small or how short or how insignificant it appears.

I have always felt that the Lord will someday reward a dear little lady who may have been a member of my church. I will turn to a member of my staff and say, "Do you know her?" He will say, "I have never heard of her. She did not sing in the choir, she was never president of any of our societies, and she never taught a Sunday school class. That woman didn't do anything, and look at the way the Lord is rewarding her!" We will probably find out that this dear lady was a widow with a young son. She never spoke to thousands of people like some evangelists and preachers, but she faithfully raised her one little boy, and he became a missionary who served God on a foreign field. The widow had been faithful in the task God had given her to do. Somebody might protest, "Well, she sure didn't work as hard as I did!" That might well be true, but God is not going to reward you for the amount of work you have done. He will reward you according to your faithfulness to the job which He called you to do. My friend, perhaps God has not called you to do something great for Him, but are you faithful in what He has assigned to you?

Jesus' Fourth Announcement Of His Death And Resurrection (20:17-19)

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them [[Matt. 20:17](#)].

Notice the physical and geographical movement of this section. Jesus and His disciples are going up out of the Jordan Valley and are approaching Jerusalem where He is to die upon the Cross.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again [[Matt. 20:18-19](#)].

Our Lord couldn't spell it out any plainer than that. This is the fourth time He is telling them -- in detail at this juncture -- exactly what is going to happen to Him. Somehow or other the disciples didn't comprehend it -- it just didn't fit into their program. However, as you and I read it now, we see very clearly that it was Christ's avowed intention to go to Jerusalem to die. Let's ponder the significance of this. He went there deliberately to die for you and for me. That is something to think about. The disciples of Jesus just couldn't believe it!

The Request Of The Mother Of James And John (20:20-28)

At the time of Jesus' significant announcement of His pending death, the mother of James and John came to Jesus to ask Him a favor.

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him [[Matt. 20:20](#)].

There are a great many of us who worship Him with the same motive!

And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom [[Matt. 20:21](#)].

On any other occasion and at any other time, this request would be a natural one for a mother who was ambitious for her children. In this instance, however, she missed the atmosphere and the very understanding of what was really taking place at that time. The Lord will answer her, and in quoting the following Scripture, I am going to leave out a portion that is not in our better manuscripts.

But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? . . . They say unto him, We are able.

And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, . . . but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father [[Matt. 20:22-23](#)].

When these two verses are read with omissions, the sense becomes clear. My friend, don't miss the meaning here because it is so important to Christians today. Our Lord is not saying that there is no place at His right hand and left hand for somebody. He is saying that He will not arbitrarily give the positions to James and John or to anyone else. Rather, the places are for those who prepare themselves for them.

Note this very carefully: Heaven is for the asking. You do nothing, nothing, for salvation. You are saved by faith in Christ through His marvelous grace. However, my friend, your position, your reward in heaven is determined by what you do down here on earth. That is very important, and Christians seem to have lost sight of it. What kind of a place are you preparing for yourself? Personally, I have no ambition for the places on Christ's right or left hand -- I'm sure I have missed those -- but I am working for a place. All of us should

be doing this. In [Philippians 3:14](#) Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The trouble with Christians today is that too few are even trying to win anything. We need to recognize salvation as a free gift, but we need to get on the race course in order to receive a reward.

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren [[Matt. 20:24](#)].

Do you know why they were moved with indignation? It was because they wanted the places at His right and left hands!

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [[Matt. 20:25-27](#)].

This is a new approach to service and greatness, and it ought to be very clear in the minds of those who are engaged in Christian service. My friend, if you are going to sing for the Lord, please don't try to walk over all the other soloists. If you are trying to be a preacher of the gospel, don't try to push aside every other minister. If you are trying to be a church officer, don't do it at the expense of someone else. Our Lord makes it very clear that the way to be great and the way to serve Him is to take the lowest place.

Now, as Jesus and His disciples are very near to the city of Jerusalem, for the fifth time He tells them of His approaching death.

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many [[Matt. 20:28](#)].

This is a tremendous verse, and every Christian ought to memorize it. This verse should be at your fingertips so that when an opportunity to witness comes, you will be able to tell just why Jesus Christ came into the world and what His mission was, because there is still confusion at that point.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men (20:29-34)

And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him [[Matt. 20:29](#)].

Jesus and His disciples are going from Jericho to Jerusalem, which is the opposite direction from the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. The Lord is going from Jericho up to Jerusalem to die with thieves. That's on the other side of the freeway, and on that side you and I can never go. We can only come to Him in faith, for He died in our stead.

By the way, some folk think that because at His trial He did not defend Himself, He never defended Himself, and that Christians should follow the same policy. However, at other times He did defend Himself. When He went to Jerusalem to die, He did not defend

Himself because He was taking my place, and I'm guilty. Believe me, there was no defense! That is the reason He did not open His mouth at that time. He was bearing my sin, and He was bearing your sin at that time.

And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David [[Matt. 20:30](#)].

I love these two fellows -- no one could keep them quiet!

And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David [[Matt. 20:31](#)].

Notice that they addressed Him accurately -- "O Lord, thou son of David." They acknowledged His kingship. The Syrophoenician at first called Him the son of David, but the Lord reminded her that she had no claim on Him in this way. These men, however, were Jews and did have a claim on Him, and they exercised their claim!

And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened [[Matt. 20:32-33](#)].

The problem of these men seemed so obvious. Why did the Lord ask what He could do for them? My friend, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you must tell Him your need. If you are coming to Him for salvation, you must tell Him that you are a sinner and need His salvation. If you don't, you will not be saved. That's the offense of the Cross. Everybody would like to come to the Cross if they could bring along the perfume of their self-righteousness and good deeds. But, my friend, you and I haven't any goodness at all, none whatsoever, to present to God. You can no more sweeten human character with training and psychology and education than you can sweeten a pile of fertilizer out in the barnyard with Chanel No. 5. We have to come to Him as sinners and receive Him as our Savior. And the blind men came to the Lord Jesus with their need, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened"!

So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him [[Matt. 20:34](#)].

Our Lord healed them, and they followed Him. Remember where He is going -- He is on His way to the Cross.

Chapter 21

THEME: Jesus enters Jerusalem officially, cleanses the temple, curses the fig tree, and when He is challenged by the chief priests and elders, He condemns them by parables of the two sons and the householder whose servants slew his son

The movement in Matthew comes back into sharp focus in this chapter. Jesus comes to Jerusalem in a new role. Heretofore He had entered the city unobtrusively. Now He

presses His claims as King upon the city of the King. Nothing could be more forward or daring. He cleanses the temple for the second time. This is presumption of the first order if He is not the One whom He claims to be. He curses the fig tree, which is a symbolic action. He meets the challenge of the religious rulers and by parable accuses them of plotting His death.

You will note the decisive and deliberate tone in the method of Jesus. He is forcing the issue now. He will force them to act when and how He chooses. He is in full control of the entire situation. He is never more kingly than when He approaches the Cross.

The So-called Triumphal Entry (21:1-11)

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them [[Matt. 21:1-3](#)].

I see no point in reading a miracle into this incident, although many people do. I believe this is a normal, natural situation. Probably when our Lord was in Jerusalem the last time He made arrangements with some friends to use these animals the next time He came to the city. He may have disclosed to them what He intended to do, and they agreed to have them ready for Him at the Passover Feast. I think that He told them that He would send a couple of His disciples to get them and that He would tell them what to say -- "The Lord hath need of them." I feel that this incident is much more wonderful if we look at it in this way.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass [[Matt. 21:4-5](#)].

This is a quotation from [Zechariah 9:9](#) -- "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

There are certain important omissions in the quotation in Matthew which a careful comparison will reveal. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" is omitted. Why? Because our Lord is not coming into Jerusalem for that time of rejoicing. That will take place at His second coming. Also omitted is "he is just, and having salvation" -- the word salvation has the thought of victory, which will be fulfilled at His second coming. The conclusion to be drawn from these portions is that at His second coming there will be a true triumphal entry.

It is assumed that our Lord was displaying His meekness by riding upon this little donkey. That is not true. This little animal was ridden by kings. In our day it would be like riding into town in a Rolls Royce. The donkey was the animal of peace while the horse was the animal of war. When Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on this little animal of peace, He was offering Himself as King. In spite of the fact that He was doing that, the prophet says that He was humble. That is very important to see.

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes,
and they set him thereon.

And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way;
others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried,
saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in
the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest [[Matt. 21:6-9](#)].

It is possible that He had never come into Jerusalem by this route before -- we'll see that in the Gospel of John. I think that generally He came in by the sheep gate in a very unobtrusive manner, the gate through which the animals for sacrifice were brought. But not this time! Here He rides in as a King, and those who are with Him recognize Him as a King. It is their opportunity to accept Him or reject Him.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved,
saying, Who is this?

And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of
Galilee [[Matt. 21:10-11](#)].

Our Lord forces Jerusalem to consider His claims for one final moment.

The Second Cleansing Of The Temple (21:12-17)

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that
sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the
moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the
house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves [[Matt.
21:12-13](#)].

That is very strong language, is it not? Now let me call your attention to certain facts regarding the so-called triumphal entry. First of all, I do not think that "triumphal" entry is the proper name for it because, as we have seen, only certain portions of Zechariah's prophecy were fulfilled. Our Lord came into the city of Jerusalem in order that He might be the Savior. He was making the final public presentation of Himself to the people. When you consider the four Gospel records together, they present a composite picture. The obvious conclusion is that He did not enter the city on only one day but on three separate days.

The first time was on Saturday, the Sabbath Day. There were no money changers on that day, and He looked around and left, "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve" ([Mark 11:11](#)). He entered as Priest.

The second day He entered Jerusalem was on Sunday, the first day of the week. The money changers were there, and He cleansed the temple ([vv. 12-13](#)). On this day He entered as King.

The third day He entered Jerusalem was on Monday, the second day of the week. At that time He wept over Jerusalem, then entered the temple and taught and healed (see [Luke 19:41-44, 47-48](#)). He entered as a Prophet that day.

As we compare these three records in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it becomes apparent that they record three different entries, and I believe that our Lord entered Jerusalem on three consecutive days and in three consecutive roles -- as Priest, as King, as Prophet. And He retired each day to Bethany. Apparently, He did not spend the night in the city until He was arrested.

Remember that the so-called triumphal entry ended at the cross. But He will come the second time in triumph. The writer to the Hebrews puts this together in a wonderful way: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" ([Heb. 9:28](#)). We are told in [Zechariah 14:4](#) that when He comes the next time to this earth, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives -- that's where He will touch down. Then when He enters the city of Jerusalem, that will be the triumphal entry! I cannot call these three entries into Jerusalem triumphal entries because He is on His way to the Cross to die for your sin and my sin.

After the Lord cleansed the temple, many came to Him for help:

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them [[Matt. 21:14](#)].

Notice how Matthew emphasizes the fact that multitudes of folk were healed.

And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased [[Matt. 21:15](#)].

They resented it.

And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there [[Matt. 21:16-17](#)].

"And he left them" indicates His rejection of the religious leaders.

"And went out of the city into Bethany." As we have indicated, our Lord did not spend the night in Jerusalem until the night of His arrest. But we find Him coming back into the

city the next day. This, I think, is the entry that Luke emphasizes for us, His third and last entry on Monday morning --

The Scorched Fig Tree (21:18-22)

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away [[Matt. 21:18-19](#)].

There has been a great deal of difficulty in attempting to interpret the fig tree incident. I have heard all sorts of ideas about what the fig tree represents. The fig tree, I believe, is symbolic of Israel as in [Matthew 24](#), as we shall see. At least we can say with confidence that when our Lord came into the world, there was no fruit evidenced by the nation of Israel. There were only the outward leaves of a ritualistic, lifeless religion. This the Lord condemned. The nation of Israel went through a religious form, but they had no power. They had turned what God had given them into a dead, lifeless ritual without vitality and virility which no longer was accomplishing God's purpose. And I am of the opinion that God will deal the same way with the organized church which has turned its back upon the person of Jesus Christ.

Again let me say that I feel His cursing of the fig tree is symbolic. Certainly He condemned the nation of Israel, and the nation suffered devastating judgment in B.C. 70.

And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! [[Matt. 21:20](#)].

To them this was an amazing thing.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive [[Matt. 21:21-22](#)].

Our Lord is giving them a lesson in prayer, that there should be faith in prayer. They marvel that the fig tree was cursed, and He tells them that their problem is that they do not have faith to believe that God can move in such a miraculous way.

Frankly, I do not believe that our business is cursing fig trees or removing literal mountains. For many years I have lived in Southern California right along the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains. To me they are lovely. I have never grown tired of them. I always enjoy looking at them, and there are never two days when they are alike. In [Psalm 121](#) the psalmist says, "I will (lit., "Shall I . . .?") lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help?" I don't think that he was implying that his help came from the hills, because he added, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" ([Ps. 121:1-2](#)). Certainly, I do not look to those mountains for help, only for enjoyment, and I have never wanted to move them. I feel that there is something bigger

and more important to do than mountain moving and fig tree cursing. To preach the gospel of Christ, to give out the Word of God so that the Spirit of God can use it -- that, my friend, is a miracle! When these lips of clay can say something that the Spirit of God can use to transform a life, that involves the kind of faith that I want. What we need is faith to believe that God can and will use His Word.

The Searching Question (21:23-27)

Again Jesus is challenged by the religious authorities --

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? [[Matt. 21:23](#)].

The religious rulers are becoming ugly and very hateful in their manner. They do not question what the Lord Jesus is doing. Do you notice that? They have no basis on which they can deny the miraculous things He does; they can only question His authority.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things [[Matt. 21:24](#)].

Here is His question to them --

The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet [[Matt. 21:25-26](#)].

You see, these religious rulers were attempting to trap Him by putting Him on the horns of a dilemma, but He immediately put them on the horns of a dilemma. He said, "I'll tell you by what authority I work if you will tell Me by what authority John the Baptist did his work. Was it from heaven or was it of men?" Of course, if they had said it was of heaven, our Lord would have said, "I move by the same authority." So they would not answer Him. They would not accept John's authority as being from heaven; so, of course, they would not accept Jesus' authority either.

And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things [[Matt. 21:27](#)].

You can sense the tension developing in this situation. The Lord is about to deliver a scathing denunciation of the religious rulers. He will give a parable that places publicans and harlots above them, and the charge of Jesus cannot be ignored. The Lord is moving against these two men.

Parable Of The Two Sons (21:28-32)

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went.

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you [[Matt. 21:28-31](#)].

This parable was a terrible insult to the religious rulers. Jesus likens them to the second son who said he would work for his father but did not. The Lord places publicans and harlots on a higher plane than these religious leaders.

This parable applies today. Many people have joined the church and are religious and think they are Christians, but they are not. They can perform their church rituals and give mental assent to the doctrines, but they are not genuine believers unless there has been a transformation in their lives. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" ([2Cor. 5:17](#)). The publicans and harlots recognized their sinfulness and came to Christ for salvation. They came late -- at first they had said no to God, but they repented and came to Him, and He received them.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him [[Matt. 21:32](#)].

The religious rulers had a religion of exterior decorations with nothing real inside. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, the interior is not only redecorated, it is made new.

Now our Lord gives them another parable before they can get out of earshot --

Parable Of The Householder And His Vineyard (21:33-46)

In this parable the householder represents God the Father, and the son is the Lord Jesus Christ. The husbandmen are a picture of Israel.

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance [[Matt. 21:33-38](#)].

This is the most pointed parable that our Lord has given so far. It is His final warning to the religious rulers. When in the parable He said, "But last of all he sent unto them his son," the Son was standing before them, giving them the parable. What are they going to do with God's Son? He is telling them right now what is in their hearts.

And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him [[Matt. 21:39](#)].

This was startling to these men!

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons [[Matt. 21:40-41](#)].

Now He sends them back to the Old Testament for the analogy of the "stone" to Himself.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof [[Matt. 21:42-43](#)].

It is interesting to note that the Lord changed the expression "kingdom of heaven" to "kingdom of God." I feel that He is using the larger term because He is getting ready to include the Gentiles and everybody that will come to Him.

"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" -- that is, taken from the Jews and given to the church. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" ([1Pet. 2:9](#)). The church is that "holy nation."

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder [[Matt. 21:44](#)].

"Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken" relates to Christ's first coming. He is the Rock on which the church is built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1Cor. 3:11](#)). To fall on that Stone is to come to Christ for salvation in this day of grace. To reject Christ is to have the Stone fall later in the judgment about which Daniel prophesied

(see [Dan. 2:34,44-45](#)), which relates to Christ's second coming. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them [[Matt. 21:45](#)].

They knew what He was talking about. In our day, unfortunately, a great many folk don't see that there is also an application for themselves, especially for those in the church.

But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet [[Matt. 21:46](#)].

Although the religious rulers had determined that Jesus should die, when they attempted to seize Him, they became fearful of the multitudes who considered Him a prophet of God.

Chapter 22

THEME: Jesus gives the parable of the marriage feast for the king's son; Jesus answers and silences the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees

Chapter 21 closed with the religious rulers determined that Jesus would die. "They sought to lay hands on him" ([Matt. 21:46](#)), but they were afraid of the multitude at that time. The chapter before us continues the verbal clash our Lord is having with the religious rulers. He gives them first the parable of the king who made a marriage feast. This is His continuing answer to the chief priests and elders which He began in the previous chapter.

Parable Of The Marriage Feast (22:1-14)

This is one of the greatest parables Jesus gave for the period in which you and I live.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said [[Matt. 22:1](#)].

Take note of the word again. This little word indicates that Jesus is still addressing the chief priests and elders mentioned in [Matthew 21:23](#).

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son [[Matt. 22:2](#)].

Obviously, "a certain king" is God the Father, and "his son" is the Lord Jesus. Notice that He resorts to the expression "kingdom of heaven" instead of Kingdom of God which He used in the previous two parables. This parable parallels the [Matthew 13](#) parables. But the emphasis here is upon how and why this age began rather than upon the conclusion of the age, which we saw in [Matthew 13](#).

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come [[Matt. 22:3](#)].

He "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding." Who were bidden? The lost sheep of the house of Israel -- our Lord had sent His apostles to them, you recall. And the prophets had been the messengers back in the Old Testament.

Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my

fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage [[Matt. 22:4](#)].

What was the response?

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them [[Matt. 22:5-6](#)].

This was Israel's rejection of God's invitation. They killed His messengers, including the Lord Jesus Himself.

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city [[Matt. 22:7](#)].

This undoubtedly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in B.C. 70 by Titus the Roman.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy [[Matt. 22:8](#)].

Now we will see a definite change in the method and manner of the invitation, and it refers to the present age in which we live --

Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests [[Matt. 22:9-10](#)].

But notice what happens --

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment [[Matt. 22:11](#)].

What is that wedding garment? The King's invitation is for everyone, but there is a danger of coming without meeting the demands of the King. That wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ which is absolutely essential for salvation, and it is supplied to all who believe. The apostle Paul speaks of this imputed righteousness: "But now the righteousness of God without the law [that is, apart from the law] is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of [from] God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all [it comes down upon all] them that believe: for there is no difference" ([Rom. 3:21-22](#)). All have to have a wedding garment.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless [[Matt. 22:12](#)].

Notice that he was speechless! I hear some folk say that they don't need to receive Christ, that they will take their chances before God, that they intend to argue their case. Well, our Lord said that this fellow without the wedding garment was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few are chosen [[Matt. 22:13-14](#)].

Whether or not you accept the wedding garment is up to you, but Christ has provided it for you. The invitation has gone out to everyone, but you will have to come on the King's terms.

Now the enemies of Christ will make their final onslaught, their final attack upon the Lord Jesus. The Herodians will come first, the Sadducees will come next, and finally the Pharisees will come. Then our Lord will question the Pharisees -- and they will try to get away from Him as quickly as they can. That marks the final break, and in chapter 23 we will hear Him denounce them.

The Herodians will come with the question of paying tribute to Caesar. The Sadducees will come with a question regarding the Resurrection. And the Pharisees will come with their question concerning the great commandment of the Law. We will see the marvelous way in which our Lord answers these men. May I say that I consider one of the proofs of His deity is the way in which He deals with the enemy.

Jesus Answers The Herodians (22:15-22)

The Herodians come to Him with a question which is actually related to their particular position. They were a political party which favored the house of Herod and looked to those of that house to deliver them from the Roman yoke. I don't think the Herodians could be considered a religious party at all because they were strongly political. However, the Pharisees apparently used them, and it is quite possible that many of the Pharisees were Herodians as well.

Notice that the Pharisees instigate this first attack upon the Lord Jesus --

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? [[Matt. 22:15-17](#)].

Obviously, they were not wanting His opinion. They had their own answer. It was a trick question. If He had said, "No, you are not to pay tribute to Caesar," He could be accused of being a traitor to Rome, and Rome was ruling over Israel at that time. If He had said, "Yes, you are to pay tribute to Caesar," He could not be the true Messiah. They thought that they had our Lord on the horns of a dilemma.

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? [[Matt. 22:18](#)].

Notice that He called them what they were -- hypocrites.

Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny
[[Matt. 22:19](#)].

It is notable that He used their coin. I have often wondered why He didn't use His own coin. I think it is because He didn't have one.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?
[[Matt. 22:20](#)].

They were using the legal tender of the Roman government, and here it was a Roman coin.

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's [[Matt. 22:21](#)].

This is an amazing answer because it involves more than just answering their question -- and He certainly did that. In addition, He is saying that they did owe something to Caesar. They were using his coins, they walked down Roman roads, and Rome did provide them with a measure of peace; so they did owe something to Rome. Therefore, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. But there is another department: Render unto God the things that are God's.

When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way [[Matt. 22:22](#)].

Obviously, this reveals that our Lord did not fall into their trap. Although they did owe Caesar something, that did not remove their responsibility to God.

The Herodians left Him, and now it's time for the Sadducees to come to bat, and they also attempt to trap Him --

Jesus Answers The Sadducees (22:23-33)

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her [[Matt. 22:23-28](#)].

The Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection. They used a ridiculous illustration to try to trap the Lord. Imagine a woman who had had seven brothers for her husbands! She must have lived in Hollywood to accomplish this. Their question was, "Whose wife shall

she be?" Now the Sadducees erred in two respects, and the Lord brings this to their attention.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do ere, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God [[Matt. 22:29](#)].

The Sadducees were ignorant in two spheres: ignorant of the Scriptures and ignorant of the power of God. Ignorance of the Scriptures and ignorance of the power of God caused them to bring up such a ridiculous illustration. The explanation is simple --

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven [[Matt. 22:30](#)].

He is not saying that they are angels. Neither will we be angels in heaven. But we will be like angels in that we will not marry in heaven. In other words, in heaven there will not be any necessity to continue the race by means of birth. This does not mean that a husband and wife who were very close down here cannot be together in heaven. If they want to be together, of course they can be together. But, my friend, think of the ones who wouldn't want to be together. They won't have to be together. However, they both will have new dispositions, and probably they will get along lots better up there than they did down here!

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living [[Matt. 22:31-32](#)].

This is a devastating statement! What about those who have gone before? What about Abraham today? Well, he is just as much Abraham today as he ever was. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been simply transferred from earth to another place. They are not dead; they are alive. And this is true of your loved ones who are in Christ and are waiting in heaven for you. This is a glorious truth!

And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine [[Matt. 22:33](#)].

Jesus Answers The Pharisees (22:34-40)

Now the Herodians and the Sadducees have been silenced. The Pharisees have been watching Jesus and these two groups. The Pharisees were a religio-political party. They wanted to see the kingdom of David brought back into power in order to rid themselves of Rome. In restoring the kingdom they could join the Herodians, but as a religious party they opposed the Sadducees. The Pharisees would correspond to the liberal wing of the church. The Pharisees, like the other two groups, were out to trap the Lord, and so their representative, a lawyer, posed a very interesting question.

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying [[Matt. 22:34-35](#)].

The Pharisees have a huddle, then they plan a strategy and put forth this very clever lawyer, that is, a scribe, an expert in the Mosaic Law, to propound a question --

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? [[Matt. 22:36](#)].

Listen to the answer of the Lord Jesus --

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment [[Matt. 22:37-38](#)].

Notice that He did not pick any one of the Ten Commandments. He gives them a second one --

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself [[Matt. 22:39](#)].

When you put this down on your life, you will recognize that you are coming short of the glory of God.

Our Lord is very straightforward with this man. He says, "You want to know which is the greatest commandment. To love God is the greatest commandment, and to love your neighbor is the next greatest."

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets [[Matt. 22:40](#)].

These two commandments actually summarized the entire Mosaic Law. The answer of Jesus was so obviously accurate that if the Pharisees had been honest, they would have said, "We have fallen short. We cannot be saved by the Law; we do need a Savior." And at that time the Lord Jesus, the Savior, was almost under the shadow of the Cross.

Jesus Puts A Question To The Pharisees (22:41-46)

The Pharisees huddle again to try to trap Him with another question, but He beats them to the punch and asks them a question --

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? [[Matt. 22:41-44](#)].

The Lord Jesus is quoting [Psalm 110:1](#). How could David call his son his Lord? The Pharisees would have to say that the son would have to be supernaturally born for David to call him "my Lord."

If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? [[Matt. 22:45](#)].

This is the searching question which our Lord put to the Pharisees.

There are several implications in this question which are tremendous. Our Lord said that David wrote [Psalm 110](#), that he wrote it by the Holy Spirit, and that he wrote it about the Messiah. "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" How could David call his son superior unless He was? The only logical answer to this question is the virgin birth. Jesus is David's son, but He is greater than David. A son of David cannot be greater than David unless there is something greater introduced into the line to make a greater son. The records of the supernatural birth of Jesus afford the only satisfactory answer. The Lord of David got into David's line, as stated in Luke's Gospel, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" ([Luke 1:35](#)). He is greater than David because He is the Lord from heaven.

The Lord Jesus was forcing the Pharisees to face up to the real issue and to acknowledge Him as David's son and as David's Lord.

This ended the verbal clash with the religious rulers.

And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions [[Matt. 22:46](#)].

They made no verbal attack upon Him after this. They had determined His death, and that is the thing toward which they are going to move. They see that they cannot answer Him. This is one of the great proofs of His deity.

Chapter 23

THEME: Jesus warns the multitude against the scribes and Pharisees; pronounces woes upon the scribes and Pharisees; weeps over Jerusalem

This chapter concludes the clash between the Lord Jesus and the religious rulers. He warns the multitudes about them and then denounces the religious rulers in unmistakable terms. No words that ever fell from the lips of our Lord were more scathing. It is a merciless condemnation. If you read this chapter carefully, it will blanch your own soul.

Jesus Warns Against The Scribes And Pharisees (23:1-12)

Jesus' public denunciation of the Pharisees took place at the temple, the stronghold of His enemies.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [[Matt. 23:1-2](#)].

These religious rulers were in the place of authority, and they controlled the Old Testament Scriptures. They usurped that which they had no right to usurp. They occupied very much the same position that church leaders occupy today. People looked to them for the interpretation of the truth.

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not [[Matt. 23:3](#)].

That is, do as the Scriptures teach, but don't follow the works of scribes and Pharisees because they are not following the Word of God.

Listen to His sad commentary upon the religious rulers --

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi [[Matt. 23:4-7](#)].

These men liked to have titles. These men liked to be recognized. They liked to wear certain religious garments and habits which set them apart from other people and drew attention to their high position. Our Lord is condemning all of this.

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren [[Matt. 23:8](#)].

"Be not ye called Rabbi" -- meaning teacher. And in the church certain respect and honor belongs to a pastor, but he is no different from anyone else. He is just one of your brothers.

And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ [[Matt. 23:9-10](#)].

A "father" is a life-giver. To call a man a "father" in spiritual matters is to put him in the place of God as the one who gives spiritual life. This is blasphemous. Only God the Father gives life. A "master" is one in a position of authority. Christ is the One in the position of authority as the head of the church today.

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted [[Matt. 23:11-12](#)].

If you want to be the greatest, then become the servant of all.

Woes Pronounced Against The Scribes And Pharisees (23:13-36)

Here we see the gentle Jesus using the harshest language that is in the entire Word of God. No prophet of the Old Testament denounced sin as the Lord Jesus denounces it.

Here in Southern California this section was called to the attention of a liberal preacher. He didn't even know it was in the Bible -- he had never read the Bible! In our day there is a misunderstanding of who the Lord Jesus really is. Liberalism gives the impression that all He ever talked about was love. One of the banners that was carried about in a protest march in Berkeley a number of years ago bore the slogan "Jesus Yes, Church No." A senator from Oregon made a great deal of that, maintaining that the church is giving the wrong impression, that this generation wants Jesus, but that they don't want the church as it is. Well, I agree that the church in general is giving the wrong impression, but the main problem is that they have really misunderstood who Jesus is. He is not the "lovechild" that the liberal thinks He is. Certainly it is true that He loves sinners and died for sinners, but also He is going to judge sinners. We need to have a correct perspective of Him. Therefore, He is the One who is misunderstood in our day.

The average conception of the Lord Jesus is not even biblical. For example, I asked a liberal preacher this: "Was the Jesus in whom you believe virgin born?"

He said, "No."

"Did He die on the cross for the sins of the world?"

"No."

"Did He rise bodily from the grave?"

"No!"

"Well, I'd like to know where that Jesus ever originated. There are no documents which give any information about that Jesus living in the first century. The only documents we have tell of One who was virgin born, who performed miracles, who died for the sins of the world, who rose from the dead, who ascended into heaven, and who is returning to this earth as the Judge."

My friend, this Jesus is not generally known today, and yet He is the only Jesus Christ who has ever lived. The other one is a figment of the imagination.

Listen to Him now as He pronounces woes upon the scribes and Pharisees. This is strong language.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in [[Matt. 23:13](#)].

The Lord uses the term woe eight times in this section and calls scribes and Pharisees hypocrites seven times. He accuses them of blocking the way to heaven by their false leadership.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation [[Matt. 23:14](#)].

In other words, these men made long prayers, but they were heartless and crooked in their business dealings.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves [[Matt. 23:15](#)].

Oh, they were great at going out and witnessing, but they were not bringing anyone to God. None of their converts were actually born again.

Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! [[Matt. 23:16](#)].

"He is a debtor!" -- that is, his oath is binding.

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty [[Matt. 23:17-18](#)].

That is, he is guilty if he fails to carry out his oath.

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

And, whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon [[Matt. 23:19-22](#)].

The Pharisees were teaching that if you swore by the temple or the altar, you were not bound to keep your oath. But if you swore by the gold of the temple or by the gift on the altar, the oath was binding. They were splitting hairs, of course, and they were placing the emphasis on material things rather than upon the spiritual purpose for which they were to be used.

Now listen to our Lord's strong denunciation --

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone [[Matt. 23:23](#)].

They were very meticulous in tithing their little plants which produce condiments like mint, anise, and cummin. For instance, when I was a boy, my mother always grew a little patch of mint out in the backyard to put in iced tea in the summertime. Can you imagine one of these religious rulers measuring off a little patch of mint and taking a tenth of it to give to the Lord? Oh, they were so strict about those little matters! But our Lord says, "You have forgotten about the weightier matters of the law." And those weightier matters would have brought these men to the person of Christ.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel [[Matt. 23:24](#)].

Do you think this verse is humorous? I do, and if I had been present when Jesus said this, I would have laughed -- unless, of course, I had been a Pharisee or a scribe. The Lord said this in a serious vein, but I am sure many in the crowd laughed, especially those who knew the old religious rulers.

There are a lot of folk who make so much of little things. I remember a dear lady who used to argue about the use of lipstick. She thought it was awful, and yet she had the meanest tongue of any person I know. She didn't think that was bad, but lipstick was terrible. Frankly, the paint of gossip on the end of the tongue -- especially when it is used to blacken somebody's reputation -- is lots worse than a little paint on the lips. It is amazing how people can strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess [[Matt. 23:25](#)].

This fifth woe pictures the Pharisees with their emphasis on the externals. This is a picture of the average church today that is so busy making the outside of the cup and platter clean. They go through all the ceremonies. They want to have the best equipment. They talk so nice and piously on the outside, but inside they do not deal with sin. In most cases, they do not even like the word sin. But all of the external ceremonies cannot clean up their inner corruption. The Pharisees substituted ritual for reality, formality for faith, and liturgy for God.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also [[Matt. 23:26](#)].

Don't misunderstand Him. He is not saying that the outside should not be clean. But you give a wrong impression when the inside is dirty and the outside is not. The place to start is on the inside.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness [[Matt. 23:27](#)].

To me this is the most frightening figure of speech which our Lord used. As I said previously, the cup and platter (saucer), clean on the outside and dirty on the inside, picture the average church in our day. But I am afraid that this simile of the tomb pictures the average church-goer -- beautiful on the outside, but on the inside they are dead in trespasses and sins. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of it to make them new creations in Christ. My friend, until that happens to you, your church membership is null and void; it is nothing but hypocrisy. When I read that over half the population of the United States are church members, I wonder why in public places I see ninety-nine percent of the crowd drinking cocktails, using profanity, and telling dirty stories. We have a whole lot of marble tombs walking around, spiritual zombies, dead in trespasses and sins.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity [[Matt. 23:28](#)].

Oh, how He is denouncing religious leaders! And they should be denounced above everyone else. My friend, if you have a Bible-teaching church in your community and a preacher who believes the Book and is trying to teach it, for God's sake stand with him in these days. He needs you, and you need him. Oh, how we need men who believe the Word of God -- and live it!

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers [[Matt. 23:29-32](#)].

And we are doing the same thing in our day. Great men of God, preachers, evangelists, missionaries, were denounced and ridiculed by their generations, but they are honored today. That was true of Spurgeon, Moody, Torrey, and many others. Our Lord sure did know human nature, and it has not changed. "You build the tombs to commemorate the prophets after they are gone, and you decorate the graves of the righteous!"

"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." These same religious leaders, who were honoring the prophets of the past, would soon force Rome to crucify the Son of God who was speaking to them.

Now this is something that will blanch your soul --

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? [[Matt. 23:33](#)].

Can you imagine stronger language than that? What does He mean by calling them a generation of vipers? He means that they are the offspring of snakes! This is devastating to that damnable doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man and the universal Fatherhood of God. God does not claim you if you have rejected Jesus Christ. The only

way to become a child of God is to receive Christ. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" ([John 1:12](#)).

The Lord is speaking in harsh terms in these verses in Matthew. He is serving a cup of tea that is a little too strong for a great many of the liberal-minded folk of this present hour. Jesus Christ was no love child. He came to earth to die for your sins because He loved you, but if you reject Him, He becomes your Judge.

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar [[Matt. 23:34-35](#)].

Apparently the slaying of Zacharias was an incident which had taken place recently. Our Lord starts at the beginning with the murder of Abel and brings them down to the present hour. He makes it very clear that God will judge Israel for destroying the righteous. He is certainly contradicting our current philosophy that everyone will ultimately be saved. He says that they will not be saved.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation [[Matt. 23:36](#)].

He is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem in B.C. 70. What does He do next? The One who made this strong denunciation will now weep over Jerusalem.

Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem (23:37-39)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate [[Matt. 23:37-38](#)].

Jerusalem rejected Him in His so-called triumphal entry, and He has rejected Jerusalem, but now He weeps over this city. Yes, He denounced them, but He does love them. And knowing the judgment which must come, He weeps.

The statement was made in Dwight L. Moody's day that he was the only man living who should preach on hell because he did it with such compassion. And certainly our Lord pronounced these woes with a heart that was breaking. You remember that some of the people thought he was Jeremiah because, although Jeremiah gave the strongest denunciation in the Old Testament, he wept over it. I am of the opinion that we today should not make denunciations unless we are personally moved by them.

For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord [[Matt. 23:39](#)].

Not only were the religious rulers in shock, but His apostles were in shock, also. This seemed to them a strange turn of events. They expected Him to establish the Kingdom, with Jerusalem as the capital. But now He says that their house is to be left desolate and that they will not see Him again until they say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." You see, although He is on His way to the Cross at this time, He gives them the assurance that He will return -- and that will be His triumphal entry!

Obviously, the Kingdom is going to be postponed. There are many who object to that teaching, but to do that, they must object to the language of our Lord. He tells His disciples that He will not establish the kingdom on earth at this time but that He will come again to establish it. That means that the Kingdom is postponed, doesn't it? The apostles were surprised and disappointed at the idea of a postponement; so they come to Him with three questions, which we will see in the following chapter.

Chapter 24

THEME: The disciples ask Jesus three questions; He answers two about the sign of the end of the age and the sign of His coming

[Matthew 24](#) and [Matthew 25](#), known as the Olivet Discourse, constitute the last of three major discourses in this Gospel. They are called major discourses because of the extent, content, and intent of them.

Jesus Predicts The Destruction Of Jerusalem (24:1-3)

Our Lord has now denounced the religious rulers. He has turned His back on Jerusalem and has told them that their house (temple) is left desolate.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple [[Matt. 24:1](#)].

The Lord Jesus has told them that His Kingdom would be postponed and that the temple would be left desolate. (The temple was made up of many buildings. This was the temple that Herod was having built, and the construction was still in progress. It was made of white marble, and at this time it was very large and very beautiful.) The disciples are disturbed at the statement of Jesus that it is to be left desolate. So the disciples come to Him, wanting to show Him around the buildings.

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down [[Matt. 24:2](#)].

"See ye not all these things?" The disciples thought they saw it, and they ask Him to take a look. So He says to them, "Do you really see it?" In our contemporary society this is a good question for us to consider. Do we really see the world around us?

When my wife and I first came to Southern California, we spent every Monday, which was my day off, riding around looking at this fantastic place. (And it was fantastic in those days before everybody in the world tried to settle here!) After we had marveled at one beautiful spot after another, I would say to my wife, "But we really don't see it as it

is. All of this is under God's judgment. It all will pass away." My friend, all these cultural centers, these great schools, these skyscrapers, these great cities which we see are going to pass away someday. It doesn't seem possible, and that is how the disciples felt.

Jesus continued by saying, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." If His first statement put them in shock, this must have traumatized them.

When I was at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem several years ago, the tour director tried to call my attention to the way the stones had been worn away by the people who had come there over the years to weep. That was certainly worth noting, but the thing that impressed me was that the wall was constructed of many kinds of stones. History tells us that the Wailing Wall was made up of stones which came from different buildings in different periods. At the pinnacle of the temple, which evidently was the corner of the temple area, recent excavations reveal the same thing -- there are all kinds of stones from different periods. What does that mean? My friend, that means that not one stone was left upon another -- the builders had to go and pick up stones from different places because in B.C. 70 Titus the Roman really destroyed that city!

Although this is ancient history to us, it was a shocking revelation to the disciples. They talked it over, I am sure, then came to Him with three questions.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? [[Matt. 24:3](#)].

(1) "When shall these things be?" -- when one stone would not be left upon another; (2) "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" -- The answer to this question is found in [verses 23-51](#); and (3) "What shall be the sign . . . of the end of the world [completion of the age]?" The answer to this question is found in [verses 9-22](#). The Lord Jesus is going to answer these three questions, and we call His answers the Olivet Discourse because it took place on the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Answers The Disciples' Questions (24:1-3)

The first question, "When shall these things be?" -- when one stone shall not be left upon another -- is not answered in the Gospel of Matthew. We find it in the Gospel of Luke, and we find segments of it in the Gospel of Mark. Why is it not included in Matthew's Gospel? Because Matthew is the Gospel of the Kingdom; it presents the King. The destruction of Jerusalem in B.C. 70 has something to do with this age in which we live, but it has nothing to do with the distant future when the King is coming. Therefore, Matthew does not carry that part of the Olivet Discourse.

Let's look at our Lord's answer to the first question, as recorded in Luke's Gospel: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days!

for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" ([Luke 21:20-24](#)).

Undoubtedly, many of those who heard the Lord Jesus say these things were present in B.C. 70 when the Roman armies surrounded the city, laid siege to it, cut it off from the rest of the world, then finally breached the wall and got in. What the Romans did was terrible. They demolished the city. It was the worst destruction in its history, more devastating than that conducted by Nebuchadnezzar over six centuries earlier. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in B.C. 70, the first part of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled.

The next two questions asked by the disciples were these: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?"

The Lord is going to answer the disciples' questions in their chronological and logical order. He will answer their last question first and their second question last. The first thing the Lord deals with is the sign of the end of the world, or more accurately, the end of the age. The world will never come to an end. The old world will pass away and a new earth will be brought on the scene. It will be similar to trading in your old car for a new one. You don't say "This is the end of the car-age for me. I don't have a car anymore." You do have a car because you traded your old one in and got a new one. And the Lord is going to trade the old world in for a new one. The world will never come to an end. But it will be the end of an age, and that is the word the disciples are using in their question to the Lord Jesus.

In this Olivet Discourse, when Christ speaks of His coming, He is referring to His return to the earth to establish His Kingdom. The church is not in the picture at all. In fact, by the end of the age, the church will have been removed, and it will be the last days of the nation Israel. He is speaking about the Great Tribulation period and so labels it in this discourse.

Jesus Traces The Characteristics Of This Age (24:4-8)

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you [[Matt. 24:4](#)].

The phrase "Take heed that no man deceive you" is characteristic of this entire age. The Lord gives this word of caution because there will be much deception, especially during the Tribulation period when the Antichrist will appear. Peter warns us in [2Peter 2:1](#), "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." We don't have to worry about false prophets, because if anybody starts prophesying in our day, we Christians can pooh-pooh him right off the scene because prophets are not for this period. However, we are to beware of false teachers, and there are a great many of those around. We must test them by Scripture. In this morning's mail a letter has come to me which illustrates this fact. It has come from a woman who apparently has an important position in an insurance company. She tells of a well-meaning friend who introduced her to a cult. After going to

her friend's church for one year, she heard our Bible-teaching radio program, and the Scripture alerted her to the error of the cult. Then she tells of how she and her entire family went to a good church in her area. My friend, we need to beware of false teaching. There is a lot of it around in our day. Our Lord warns, "Take heed that no man deceive you."

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many [[Matt. 24:5](#)].

Near the end of the age many people will claim to be Christ. We have such people present with us now. One man established a "holy city" in Northern California and expected any minute to be called to Washington, D.C., to solve the problems of the world. There are no "holy cities" on the face of the earth, but someday the Lord will come from the Holy of Holies in heaven to earth and solve the problems. It should be remembered that even now there are many antichrists, but at the end of the age there will come one Antichrist who will oppose Christ and set himself up as the only authority.

I believe that our Lord, up there on the Mount of Olives, looked down to the end of the age and to the Great Tribulation period, but that at the beginning of His discourse, He bridged the gap by giving us a picture of the present age of the church. I recognize that there are many good Bible teachers, much better than I am, who take the position that in [verses 5-8](#) He is speaking of the Tribulation period, also; so if you want to disagree with me, you will be in very good company. However, it is my view that our Lord is not referring to the Great Tribulation until we reach [verse 9](#) of this chapter.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet [[Matt. 24:6](#)].

Wars and rumors of wars are not the sign that we are at the end of the age, by any means. The Lord is bridging the gap from where the disciples are to the end of the age. It is easy to think of major wars as indicative of the fact that we are at the end of the age. They are not! There have been many major wars in the past few thousand years and only about two hundred years of peace. When I was a little boy at the end of World War I, I remember hearing my dad and others talking about the books being printed declaring it was the end of the world. World War I caused this type of thinking. But after the war, we had a worldwide depression, World War II, and the atom bomb. By this time, I was a pastor in Pasadena, and I told my congregation that a wheelbarrow load of books would come out saying that we were at the end of the world because of World War II. You know something? I was wrong! Two wheelbarrow loads of books were printed, and they were sensational.

We have come a long way from World War II, and the end of the age still has not come. We should listen to the Lord and stop listening to false teachers. We will hear about wars and rumors of wars, but we should not be troubled because all these things will come to pass, and still it will not be the end of the age. Friend, we should also keep in mind that man will never solve the problem of war. The League of Nations could not solve this problem, and the United Nations will not be able to solve it either. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:
and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in
divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows [[Matt. 24:7-8](#)].

These are characteristics of the entire age and are therefore not signs of the end of the age, "but the end is not yet" ([v. 6](#)). False christs, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes characterize the entire church age, but they will apparently be intensified as we draw near to the end of the age. Right now the population explosion has the world frightened and rightly so. People are starving to death by the thousands and the millions. And this situation is going to increase. The old black horse of famine (see [Rev. 6:5-6](#)) hasn't appeared yet, but at the end of the age the black horse and its rider will come forth. What we see today is just the beginning of sorrows.

The next verse begins with our first time word:

The Beginning Of The Tribulation With Its Signs (24:9-14)

Now the Lord begins to speak of the time of tribulation. You and I are living in the "age of the church" or the "age of the Holy Spirit," as some people like to speak of it. The Bible divides the world today into three groups of people: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (see [1Cor. 10:32](#)). In this age God is calling out a people to His name from both Jews and Gentiles to compose the third group, the church. It is this third group which will be taken out of the world at the time of the Rapture. Then the Great Tribulation will begin, and I believe that [verse 9](#) speaks of this beginning --

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:
and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake [[Matt. 24:9](#)].

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted" -- who is the you? Obviously, He is not addressing the church but the nation Israel. The affliction He is talking about is anti-Semitism on a worldwide scale.

At this point let me inject an important fact for Christians in our day. As long as the true church is in the world, there could not be worldwide anti-Semitism because the church would resist it. No genuine believer in the Lord Jesus could hate the Jews; it is an impossibility. It is my feeling that the liberal wing of the church is presenting a false front to the Jews and that in the final analysis it will turn against them. But as long as the true church is in the world, there won't be worldwide anti-Semitism; it will break out after the church has been removed at the Rapture.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another,
and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many [[Matt. 24:10-11](#)].

As we saw earlier, the church is warned against false teachers while Israel is warned against false prophets. So here, after the church has been removed, again the warning is against false prophets.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold
[\[Matt. 24:12\]](#).

This is a principle, and there are many principles in this Olivet Discourse which we can apply to our own day. Not long ago I met a preacher who had been a schoolmate of mine. He has become liberal in his theology; he drinks his cocktails, smokes his cigarettes, and lives just like the rest of the world lives. He told me, "McGee, you don't fight city hall; you join it!" He told me about how sinful practices had gotten into his church and how he is not planning to fight them. When iniquity abounds, the love of many grows cold, and this will be even more true at the end of the age.

This next verse is very startling to some folk --

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved
[\[Matt. 24:13\]](#).

The question is: Who endures to the end? Well, when I study the Book of Revelation, I find that God will stop all the forces of nature and of evil and even the forces of good while He seals a certain number of folk. So who is going to endure to the end? Those whom He seals at the beginning, of course. The Good Shepherd -- in all ages -- will bring His sheep through to the end. When He starts with a hundred sheep, He comes through with a hundred sheep.

When someone says to me, "So-and-so was very active in the church and has gone into sin. Is he saved?" I can only reply that I do not know. We will have to wait to see what happens. I tell people that the pigs will eventually end up in the pigpen, and the prodigal sons will all find their way back to the Father's house. It is confusing to find a son in a pigpen and a pig in the Father's house. Peter says, ". . . the sow that was washed [has returned] to her wallowing in the mire" ([2Pet. 2:22](#)). Let's say that one of the little pigs went with the prodigal son to the father's house, that he was scrubbed clean, his teeth brushed with Pepsodent, and that a pink ribbon was tied around his neck. But he wouldn't stay in the father's house. Sooner or later he would go back to the pigpen where he belonged. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." You'll just have to wait and see. Sometimes a son, a Christian, will get into a pigpen, but since he is a son, he will get out someday. Why? Because he has a wonderful Shepherd. "The same shall be saved."

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world
for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come [\[Matt. 24:14\]](#).

The gospel of the Kingdom is what John the Baptist preached -- "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 3:2](#)). And the Lord Jesus began His ministry with that message -- "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 4:17](#)). Also, He sent His apostles out with that message (see [Matt. 10](#)). But in [Matthew 11:28](#), we saw that our Lord's message changed to "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And in [Matthew 20:28](#) He said that He had come to give His life a ransom for many. But during the Tribulation period the gospel of the Kingdom will again be preached. It is not

for our day, because we are to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Is the gospel of the Kingdom another gospel? No, my friend, it is not. It is the same gospel with a different emphasis. We have no right to say that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand because we don't know. But when the Great Tribulation period begins, the people will know that they are close to the end, although they will not know the day nor the hour. Therefore, the message will be, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now let me answer our critics who say that we who hold the dispensational view of Scripture teach that there are two or more ways of being saved. No, God has never had more than one basis on which He saves men, and that basis is the Cross of Christ. Every offering before Christ came looked forward to the Cross of Christ, and every commemoration since He has come looks back to the cross of Christ.

To illustrate this, let's go back to [Genesis 4](#) and look at the offering which Abel brought to God. He brought a little lamb. If you had been there, you could have asked Abel, "Why are you bringing this little lamb? Do you think that a little lamb will take away your sins?" He would have said, "Of course not! I'm bringing this little lamb because God told me to do so. I am bringing it by faith." Then you could have asked him, "Well, if it won't take away your sins, why would He ask you to bring it?" Abel's answer would have been something like this: "This little lamb is pointing to One who is coming later, the seed of the woman, my mother. That One will take away our sins. I bring this little lamb by faith, recognizing that I am a sinner and need a substitute." You see, Abel was looking forward to the One who was coming.

John the Baptist not only said, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 3:2](#)), but he also said, ". . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). John identified Him. Before the coming of Christ everyone who had come to God on His terms was saved on credit. And they were forgiven on the basis of the death of Christ. In the Old Testament God never saved anyone by Law. At the heart of the Mosaic system was the sacrificial system. They brought a lamb to God because the Law revealed that they were lawbreakers, that they were not obeying God, and that they did need to have a substitute to pay the penalty of their sins. The Law was given ". . . that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" ([Rom. 3:19](#)). My friend, you and I are lawbreakers, we are sinners needing a Savior. The thing to do is to receive Christ as your Savior before He comes as the Sovereign of this universe when He will be your Judge.

Now, going back to the verse we have been considering, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." This does not mean that while the church is here in the world the end can't come until the gospel of the grace of God is preached worldwide. I know there are those who use this verse to promote their Bible-teaching programs. While it is laudable to want to get the gospel to the ends of the earth, this is not the verse to use to promote it. You see, my friend, it is important to interpret Scripture in its context. Remember that our Lord is answering the question, "What is the sign of the end of the age?" (see [v. 3](#)). He is speaking of that end time.

The Great Tribulation With Its Trouble And Sorrows (24:15-22)

Now Jesus gives the sign that will identify this period of time.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) [[Matt. 24:15](#)].

What is the abomination of desolation? Well, Daniel tells us about two of them. One of them was Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian, who came down and destroyed Jerusalem. In [Daniel 11:31](#) we read: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." History bears out the fact that Antiochus Epiphanes came against Jerusalem in 170 B.C., at which time over one hundred thousand Jews were slain. He took away the daily sacrifice from the temple, offered the blood and broth of a swine upon the altar, and set up an image of Jupiter to be worshiped in the holy place.

However, our Lord is undoubtedly referring to the second abomination of desolation to which Daniel alludes (see [Dan. 12:11](#)), and I believe that it will be an image of Antichrist which will be set up in the temple. During the Tribulation the temple will be rebuilt and the nation of Israel will be back in Palestine. Obviously, our Lord is speaking of the temple rather than the church, because the church has no holy place. However, we cannot be certain that this is the abomination of desolation to which our Lord refers in the passage before us; this is just our surmising.

I am not looking for the abomination of desolation -- I wouldn't know it if I met it on the street -- but the people in the last days will be looking for it because it will be the sign to prove that they are in the Great Tribulation period. Instead of our looking for Antichrist and his abominations, we are told to be "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)).

Our Lord says, "(whoso readeth, let him understand:)," which means the people who are living at that time will understand. Since you and I won't be there, He hasn't given us many details.

Now we are given another time word. When the abomination of desolation appears, "Then" --

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains [[Matt. 24:16](#)].

You and I are not expecting to flee to the mountains of Judea. I live very near the San Gabriel Mountains, and my neighbor tells me that if an atom bomb is dropped in Southern California, he is going to head for a certain canyon up there (and I may follow him!), but that will not fulfill this prophecy. In fact, it has nothing whatever to do with it. Rather, it has to do with people who are in Judea. Our Lord is giving that prophecy to those people, not to us.

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house [[Matt. 24:17](#)].

The housetop in Palestine corresponds to our front porch or our patio. Again let me emphasize the fact that our Lord is speaking to the folk in Palestine, not to you and me. This warning is not applicable to us; we don't spend our time on our housetops!

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes
[[Matt. 24:18](#)].

This refers to people engaged in agriculture. If a worker in the fields leaves his cloak at the end of the row in the early morning when it is cool, and the word comes that the abomination of desolation has appeared, he is not to go back and get his cloak, but he is to start running.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck
in those days! [[Matt. 24:19](#)].

This reveals His great care and concern for mothers and little children. It will be a time when one should not have children.

It is believed that there will be a great population explosion at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The fact that this earth is becoming overweighted with people in our day may be another evidence that we are approaching the end of the age.

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the
sabbath day [[Matt. 24:20](#)].

Again, these are people who are observing the Sabbath day, which is Saturday. This is another proof that Christ is speaking directly to the Jewish people. I don't go to church on the Sabbath but on Sunday because my Lord rose from the dead on that day.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the
beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [[Matt. 24:21](#)].

"For then shall be great tribulation" -- in [Revelation 7:14](#) the literal translation is "the tribulation the great one," placing the article before both the noun and the adjective for emphasis. In other words, this tribulation is unique; there has been nothing like it in the history of the world, and there will never again be anything like it. And notice that our Lord is the One who labels the end of the age as the Great Tribulation. (If you want to find fault with it, talk to Him, not to me.)

"Such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Since that is true, believe me, people will know it when it gets here! I hear people today talking about the church going through the Tribulation, and they don't seem to realize how severe it will be. In fact, some folk say that we are in the Great Tribulation at the present time! Well, things are bad in our day, I'll grant that, but this period can be matched with many other periods in history. When the Great Tribulation gets here, there will be nothing to match it in the past or in the future.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh
be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened
[[Matt. 24:22](#)].

We read in the Book of Revelation that during the Tribulation one third of the population of the earth will be destroyed. On another occasion one-fourth of the population will be destroyed. It is absolutely unique. Using the simile given to us in [Revelation 6](#), the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and then the pale horse of death will ride during that period, and the population of the earth will be decimated. There was a time when this seemed to be an exaggeration. Even some good commentators considered it hyperbole. However, now that several nations of the world have atom bombs, which could destroy the population of the world, it no longer appears to be exaggerated.

However, there is comfort in this verse -- "but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." God will not let mankind commit suicide. That is the reason this will be such a brief period.

Jesus Assures Them Concerning His Coming Again (24:23-31)

Now we come to what will be the sign of His coming.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before [[Matt. 24:23-25](#)].

Don't miss what He is saying here. The ability to work miracles in our day should be looked upon with suspicion because the next great miracle worker will not be Christ; he will be Antichrist with his false prophets.

"If it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." Who are the elect? In the Scriptures there are two elect groups: the elect of the nation Israel and the elect of the church. We have to use common sense to determine which group is meant. Who has our Lord been talking about up to this point? Israel. All right, Israel is the elect in this verse, also. Jesus is not talking about the church. You can fool some of the people some of the time. You can fool all of the people some of the time. But you cannot fool God's children all of the time. It just can't be done. I have read many letters which testify of this. A recent letter is from a woman who has come out of a religious cult. She listened to our Bible-teaching radio program for months before she could see the error of the cult's teaching. It isn't possible to fool God's children all the time. They will come out of a cult eventually.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be [[Matt. 24:26-27](#)].

When He comes, there will not be any John the Baptist to announce Him. But when He comes, the whole world will know and it will be as public as lightning. Those of you that live in the Middle West know that a lightning storm is a public affair. When it comes, everybody knows about it, and sometimes it is a frightful experience. The Lord's second

coming to the earth will be like that. No one will need to announce it. When our Lord comes the second time to establish His Kingdom on earth, everyone will know He is coming. (Remember that His second coming to earth does not refer to the Rapture.)

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together [[Matt. 24:28](#)].

This is the most difficult verse to understand in the entire Olivet Discourse. After speaking of His coming in glory like lightning out of heaven, then to speak of carrion-eating birds seems strange indeed. But I believe it refers to Christ's coming in judgment, because [Revelation 19](#) tells us about an invitation that went out to the birds to come together for a great banquet, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army" ([Rev. 19:17-19](#)). The birds that feed on carrion seem to be agents of divine judgment. When the Lord comes again, He will come in judgment.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken [[Matt. 24:29](#)].

Notice that this is to be "Immediately after the tribulation of those days." It is my understanding that all of these things will take place at Christ's second coming to the earth.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [[Matt. 24:30](#)].

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." What is that sign? Again I will have to speculate. Back in the Old Testament, you remember, the nation Israel was given the glory, the Shekinah presence of God. No other nation or people has ever had that, nor does the church have it. The Shekinah glory rested over the tabernacle and later the temple at Jerusalem. But because of Israel's sin, the Shekinah glory left the nation. When Christ came the first time, He laid aside, not His deity, but His prerogative of deity, His glory -- although John says, " . . . we beheld his glory . . ." ([John 1:14](#)), because there were times when it broke through. However, at His second coming, I believe that the Shekinah glory will hover over the earth before He breaks through, and that will be the "sign of the Son of man in heaven."

"They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This is His return to earth to set up His kingdom.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [[Matt. 24:31](#)].

The elect spoken of in this verse is still the nation Israel. The prophets in the Old Testament foretold of a miracle that would bring the Jews back into their land. (This is not the church which is going to be caught up out of this world to meet the Lord in the air. Angels are not connected with the Rapture.) The Lord will come in person to receive the church with the sound of a trumpet, and His voice will be like that of an archangel. He will not need any help to gather His church together. He died for the church, and He will bring it together. When He says that the "angels . . . shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," we can be sure that He is talking about the nation Israel -- ministering angels have always been connected with Israel.

The Parable Of The Fig Tree As A Sign (24:32-51)

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors [[Matt. 24:32-33](#)].

I don't see how the fig tree could represent anything other than the nation Israel (e.g., see [Jer. 24](#); [Hos. 9:10](#)). There are certainly fig trees growing in abundance in Israel even in our day after all that has happened to that land. I was impressed with the fig orchards north of Jerusalem and the vineyards south of Jerusalem -- the area south of Bethlehem is filled with vineyards. Fig trees and grapevines identify the land, and I believe that our Lord is using the fig tree as a symbol of that land.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled [[Matt. 24:34](#)].

"This generation" -- the Greek word can mean race and refer to the nation Israel. Or it could refer to the generation that will be living at the time these predictions come to pass. A generation is reckoned to be about twenty years, and certainly the predicted events of this section will take place in a much briefer time than twenty years. My feeling is that it could refer to either one, but I much prefer the interpretation that it refers to the preservation of the Jewish race. Haman was not able to destroy them, neither was Pharaoh, nor did Hitler succeed in his attempts. And no dictator in our day will be able to exterminate these people -- God will see to that.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away [[Matt. 24:35](#)].

He says, "You can just underscore what I've said, because heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not." Heaven and earth will pass away; there will be a new heaven and a new earth (see [Rev. 21:1](#)), but He will not change His Word; it will stand throughout the eternal ages.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only [[Matt. 24:36](#)].

Although they will know that this period is drawing near, they will not know the day nor the hour. Since there have been so many folk in our day who have tried to pinpoint the time of Christ's return, I'm of the opinion that in that future day there will be some folk who will try to figure it down to the very hour. But no one will know either the day or the hour. And He will use the illustration of Noah --

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be [[Matt. 24:37](#)].

Christ will come in a day which will be like the days of Noah.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be [[Matt. 24:38-39](#)].

Now, the days of Noah were characterized by gross immorality -- every thought and imagination of man's heart was only evil continually (see [Gen. 6:5](#)). But our Lord says that His coming will be in days like the days of Noah, and He mentions only that they were eating and drinking. Is there anything wrong with eating and drinking? No, we are told that whatever we do -- whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God (see [1Cor. 10:31](#)). However, the people in Noah's day were not eating and drinking to the glory of God. In fact, they were living as though God did not exist.

A little boy was invited out to dinner for the first time in his life. He was just going next door, but to him it was a big event. So when the time came to go, he made a beeline for the house next door. When they sat down to the table to eat, the boy automatically bowed his head to offer thanks for the food because he came from a Christian home. Suddenly he realized he was the only one with a bowed head and the rest of the folk were passing food back and forth. He opened his eyes and, not having any inhibitions, said, "Don't you thank God for your food?" There was embarrassing silence for a moment, and then the lady of the house said, "No, we don't." The little fellow thought for a moment and then said, "You're like my dogs -- they just start right in!"

In our day there are multitudes of people who receive a meal that comes from the hand of God three times a day while millions of people are starving to death, and they never think of thanking God. And in that future day, they will be right on the verge of the coming of Christ, and they will be living as though it will never take place.

Also, the people of Noah's day were "marrying and giving in marriage." Certainly our Lord is not saying that marriage is wrong. His point is that they rejected so completely God's warning through Noah that they went ahead and had their weddings -- maybe even "church" weddings -- right up to the day that Noah entered into the ark. They lived as though God did not exist. They did not believe that He would judge them and scorned the warning that a flood was imminent. "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left [[Matt. 24:40-41](#)].

I can hear someone saying to me, "Well, preacher, you have finally painted yourself into a corner. You said the church and the Rapture are not in the Olivet Discourse, but here they are. Two shall be in the field; one shall be taken, and the other shall be left."

Well, my friend, He still is not talking about the Rapture. After all, what is our Lord talking about here? "As the days of Noe were." Who was taken away in the days of Noah? "They knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." They perished in the Flood. This is not referring to the Rapture when the church will be taken out of the world. Rather, this pictures the removing from the earth by judgment those who are not going to enter the millennial Kingdom.

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come [[Matt. 24:42](#)].

Watch is the important word, and it has a little different meaning from the watching that the child of God does now in waiting for the Rapture. Today we have a comforting hope. In that future day it will be watching with fear and anxiety. In the night they will say, "Would to God it were morning," and in the morning they will say, "Would to God it were evening." Today we are to wait and long for His coming. In that future day they will watch with anxiety for His return.

You may think that I am splitting hairs, but I'm not. I looked up the Greek word for watch and found that it had about eight different meanings. Although in English we have only the one word, it has several different meanings, also.

Let me illustrate this by a man who goes deer hunting. Every year this man goes into the woods to about the same spot. He puts up camp, and early in the morning he goes over the hogback on the hill and sits down by the trunk of an old tree and waits. After a while he hears a noise in the brush and thinks it might be a deer. He lifts his rifle and waits. He is watching for a deer.

Two weeks later you meet this same man down on the main street corner of town, and you see that he is looking intently down the street. You know that he is waiting for someone. You walk up to him and say, "Who are you watching for?" He replies, "I'm waiting for my wife; she is forty-five minutes late." He is watching for a deer again, but it is a different deer and he is watching in a little different way. Before, on the hill, he had his deer gun with him, and he sort of wishes he had it with him again, but it is against the law for him to shoot her! But he is watching, and watching in a different way, you see.

A month or two later you go to the hospital and you pass a room and see this man and his wife sitting by the bedside of a little child. The child has a burning fever, and the doctor has told them that the crisis will come about midnight. They are watching. My friend, that is a different type of watching than watching for a deer or waiting for a wife on the corner. This is watching with anxiety. And I think it will be somewhat with the same feeling that they will watch for our Lord's second coming.

But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? [[Matt. 24:43-45](#)].

What our Lord is doing in the remainder of the Olivet Discourse is giving parables to illustrate the attitude of folk to His coming and what will happen when He does come.

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

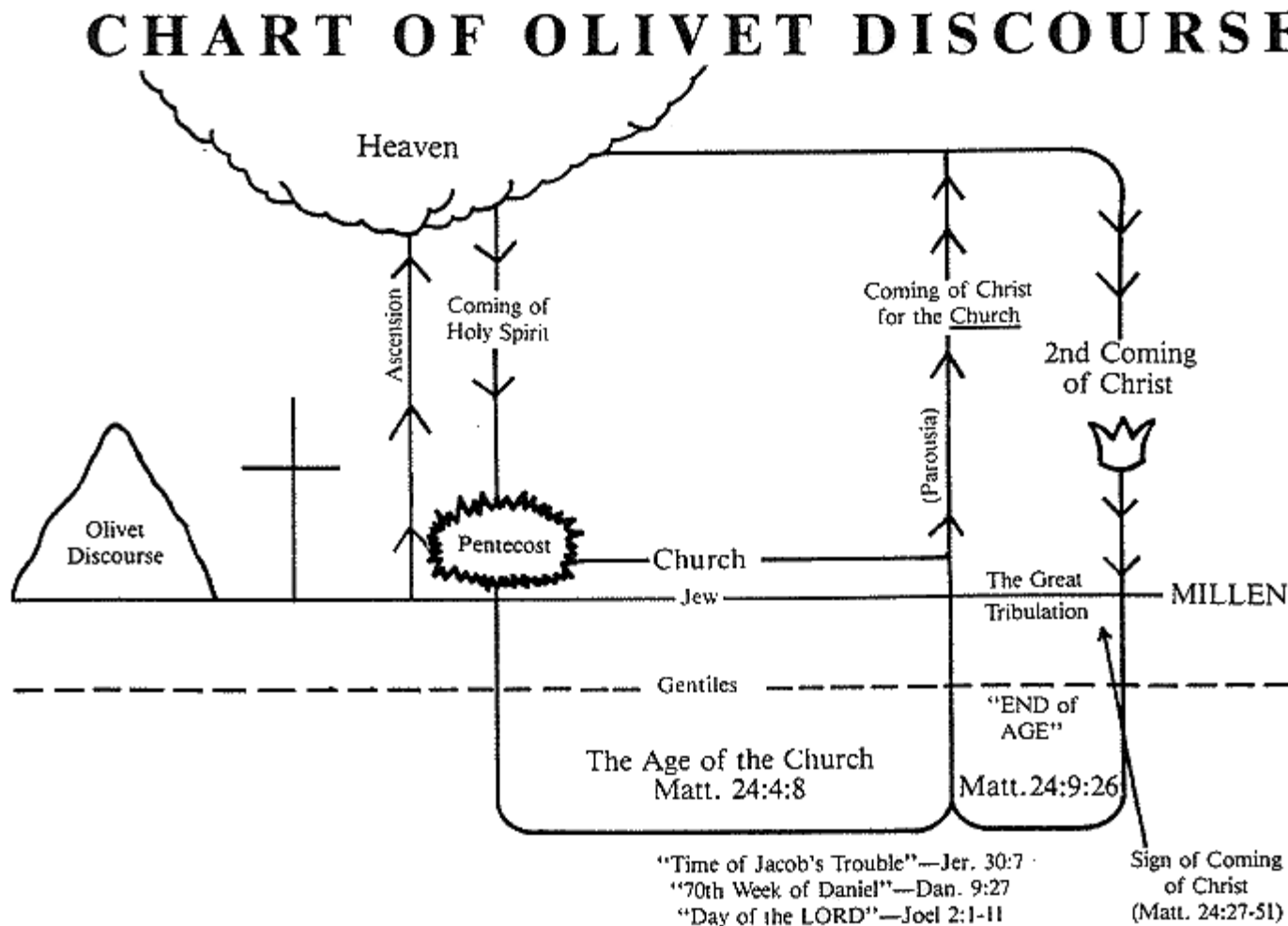
And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth [[Matt. 24:46-51](#)].

This parable reflects the attitude of some folk in that future day. They shall say, "Well, the Lord delays His coming -- so I'll just go on living carelessly." When Christ returns, He will judge that man.

This is a great principle which is applicable to every age. You and I ought to live our lives in the light of the fact that we are to stand in the presence of Christ. Note that I didn't say in the light of the coming of Christ but in the light of the presence of Christ. Regardless of whether Christ comes a hundred years from today or a thousand years, you and I will stand in His presence. Whether you are saved or lost, you will stand in His presence. If you are saved, you will have to give Him an account of your life to see if you receive a reward. If you are lost, you will stand there to be judged. Therefore, every person should live his life in light of the fact that he is to stand in the presence of the Lord. This is the great emphasis in the Olivet Discourse. Therefore, it has applications to us, although the interpretation is specifically to folk living at the time of Christ's return as King.



Picture: Chart Of Olivet Discourse

Chapter 25

THEME: Olivet Discourse continued -- the parable of the ten virgins, the talents, and the judgment of the gentile nations

This chapter enlarges upon the answer of Jesus to the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" ([Matt. 24:3](#)). There is the parable of the ten virgins, which tests the genuineness of the faith of Israel; the parable of the talents, which tests the faithfulness of His servants; and the judgment of the gentile nations, which tests their right of admission into the Kingdom. This chapter shows the significance of the coming of Christ as it relates to these groups that shall then be in the world. A close analysis of each group will reveal that it can be stripped down to a personal attitude and relationship to Jesus Christ.

The parable of the ten virgins is the basis for those who believe in what is known as the partial rapture, where only some will be taken out of the world. The "partial rapture" group is made up of very fine people. When I first became pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, there was a wonderful Bible class there, and they supported me in getting

Bible conferences into Nashville. From the beginning, the class had been taught by a teacher who believed in a partial rapture. Candidly, I feel that the partial rapture theory ministers to spiritual snobbery. I never met one of that group who didn't think that he was with the five wise virgins. In fact, I have never in all my life met one who thought he was classed with the foolish virgins! I was a young preacher in those days, and as I worked with them I had the feeling that they were not sure that I was one of them. I suspected that they classified me as one of the foolish ones.

I thank God that when the Rapture takes place, every believer is going out. And we won't be going on the basis of merit. All of us will be leaving because of the grace of God. He saves us by grace; He keeps us by grace; He will take us out of this world by grace; and when we have been there for ten million years, it will be by the grace of God.

The ten virgins do not refer to the church, they refer to the nation Israel. My friend, we need to let our Lord answer the questions of these men who were His apostles. They had asked Him the questions. If we try to make out that He is talking to us about something altogether different, it is as though we are interrupting Him. Let's just listen and know that, although He is talking to someone else, we can make application of these wonderful parables to our own lives.

Parable Of The Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins,
which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom
[[Matt. 25:1](#)].

To better understand the customs in Israel during the New Testament period, we refer to the Peshitta, which is a Syriac version of the Bible. Although it is not a text to be recommended, it does shed light on some of the customs of the day. The Peshitta translation of the verse before us indicates that the virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride, which means that the bridegroom is coming from the marriage to the marriage supper. It is my understanding that, although the marriage of Christ and the church takes place in heaven, the marriage supper takes place on this earth. A passage in the Gospel of Luke substantiates this. As our Lord is giving warnings and parables, He says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" ([Luke 12:35-36](#)). You see, the wedding has taken place, and the bride is with him. Obviously, if he is coming from the wedding, the bride is with him; no man ever went on a honeymoon by himself -- if he did, it wasn't a honeymoon!

So here in the parable of the ten virgins, Christ, pictured as the bridegroom, is bringing the bride with Him, and the believers on earth are waiting for Him to come. While the Great Tribulation has been going on upon the earth, Christ has been yonder in heaven with His bride, the church. Then at the conclusion of the seven years of Tribulation, He comes back to earth with the church.

This, now, is the attitude toward His coming on the part of those on the earth --

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps [[Matt. 25:2-4](#)].

Oil is symbolic of the Spirit of God. In that day I think there will be phonies as there were at His first coming. Jesus called them hypocrites. They will have lamps but no oil.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps [[Matt. 25:5-7](#)].

Notice that both the wise and the foolish virgins slept. The difference in them was that some had the Holy Spirit (represented by the oil) and some did not -- because they were not genuine believers.

Our Lord concludes this parable with a warning --

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh [[Matt. 25:13](#)].

Notice that it is "the day nor the hour" rather than the century or the year, as it is from our perspective. The attitude for His own during this future period is to watch. That is the important thing for them to do.

Parable Of The Talents (25:14-30)

This is another parable for that future generation that will be waiting for our Lord's return to earth.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey [[Matt. 25:14-15](#)].

Notice that the master gave to his servants responsibilities according to their individual abilities.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two [[Matt. 25:16-17](#)].

Notice that the "talents" were sums of money. They do not represent talents in the sense of the natural endowments of a person such as a musical talent. The application to us is that whatever God has given to us, we are to use for Him.

But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money [[Matt. 25:18](#)].

All were given a certain sum of money and told to use it profitably. But one buried the talent he had been given. He was not faithful to his master.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine [[Matt. 25:19-25](#)].

The response of his master was this --

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth [[Matt. 25:26-30](#)].

There is a great principle in this parable for us. And it was given in the light of the fact that all of us -- you and I included -- are going to have to stand in the presence of God and give an account of how we have used what He has given to us. The Lord is not going

to ask us how much we have done for Him but how faithful we have been to that which He wanted us to do.

For the child of God there are two important things: (1) Find out what God wants us to do; that is, determine what the talent is that He has given us, and then (2) be faithful in the use of it. To some of us God gives a very small ministry, and that may be upsetting to us; but if we are one-talent people, God expects us to be faithful with that.

Judgment Of The Nations (25:31-46)

In this chapter our Lord is alerting God's people to the fact that we are to ready ourselves for His coming. This is certainly true in the next few verses.

During the Tribulation period all nations will have the opportunity to hear and receive God's message. The gospel of the Kingdom will be preached among all nations, we are told. But some will reject God's messengers, Christ's brethren, and thereby reject Christ.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory
[[Matt. 25:31](#)].

The polarization of all of the Olivet Discourse is moving toward the placing of Jesus Christ on the throne of this world. This is the message of the Gospel of Matthew -- in fact, it is the message of the entire Word of God.

Now we will see that the nations will be judged. You may ask, "Doesn't it mean individuals?" Yes, you can consider it as individuals composing the nations. But nations are responsible to God.

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats [[Matt. 25:32](#)].

"Nation" is the Greek word *ethnos*, we could say that it means ethnic groups.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left [[Matt. 25:33](#)].

I do not know of an instance when God calls individuals goats. All human beings are called sheep. There are two kinds: lost sheep and saved sheep. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" ([Isa. 53:6](#)). There are lost sheep and saved sheep, not sheep and goats. I believe that the goats represent groups of nations.

Now notice what the test is --

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me [[Matt. 25:34-40](#)].

The 144,000 Jews sealed at the time of the Great Tribulation will go out over the entire world to preach the message of the gospel of the Kingdom, which is to receive Christ as the sacrifice for their sins and to be ready for His immediate coming. Some nations will reject Christ. Antichrist will have God's messengers butchered and slain, and anyone who would give them a cup of cold water will do so at the risk of his life. To hand out a cup of cold water has little value in our day, but in the Great Tribulation it will have tremendous value. It will mean taking a stand for Jesus Christ. The basis on which the nations will be judged is their acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" -- because the messengers were representing Him. That will be the way they evidence faith in the message that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and that they are to repent and turn to Christ to be saved.

For those who reject, there is only judgment --

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal [[Matt. 25:45-46](#)].

Entire nations will enter the millennial Kingdom. Out of these will be some individuals who will reject Christ. But the judgment of the nations at the second coming of Christ is to determine what nations are to enter the millennial Kingdom. This judgment is separate and distinct from all other judgments.

Chapter 26

THEME: Final events in the life of Jesus immediately before the Cross; the plot to arrest Him; the anointing by Mary of Bethany; the selling by Judas Iscariot; the celebration of the first Lord's Supper; the predicted denial by Peter; the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; the betrayal by Judas; the arrest by the chief priests; the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin; the denial by Peter

This is the longest chapter in the Gospel of Matthew. There is a break at the conclusion of [verse 30](#). The events recorded in [John 15](#) -- [John 17](#) could be inserted here. Another

natural break would be at the beginning of [verse 57](#). A chapter division here would set the trial before the religious rulers in a separate category. Perhaps those who divided the Scriptures included so many events in one chapter to give the reader something of the scope and rapidity of these significant happenings.

Every incident and detail in this chapter points to the Cross. There is a trip-hammer precision here that may give the reader the impression that Jesus is caught in the vortex of circumstances over which He has no control. A careful examination and consideration, however, will reveal that He is the master of circumstances, and He is never more kingly than when He draws near the Cross.

All things recorded in this chapter and chapter 27 should be studied in the light of His determination at Caesarea Philippi -- six months previously -- to go to Jerusalem to die: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" ([Matt. 16:21](#)).

He is moving according to God's timetable, and He is forcing the issue. He is not the helpless victim caught between the upper millstone of religious intrigue and the nether millstone of Roman power. A reverence should pervade our thinking as we consider these things written in this chapter, for they are vitally related to our salvation.

Plan To Kill Jesus (26:1-5)

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples [[Matt. 26:1](#)].

"When Jesus had finished all these sayings" -- what sayings? The Olivet Discourse. He has answered their questions regarding the end of the age, and now He has something else for them --

Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified [[Matt. 26:2](#)].

Now let's read ahead to [verse 5](#) and see something very interesting here --

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people [[Matt 26:3-5](#)].

In [verse 2](#) Jesus tells His disciples that He is going to die. According to the record, this is the sixth time He has told them. Six months before this, beginning at Caesarea Philippi, He announced His impending death. And now He sets the time of His death. He tells them that He will die during the Passover. But the religious rulers had other plans -- notice [verse 5](#). "But they said, Not on the feast day lest there be an uproar among the people." The very ones who put Him to death said that they would not crucify Him during the Passover; He said that He would die during the Passover. When did He die?

He died during the Passover. You see, Jesus, not His enemies, set the time of His execution. He is in command; He is the King in Matthew's Gospel, and when He seems more helpless and weak than at any other time, He still is in charge. The bitter hatred of His enemies had led them to plot His murder, and they wanted to do it their way, but they will not be permitted to do that. The closer Jesus gets to the Cross, the more kingly He becomes.

We pass from that incident to one of marvelous light.

Jesus Is Anointed By Mary Of Bethany (26:6-13)

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat [[Matt. 26:6-7](#)].

Bethany was the place of love, as Jerusalem was the place of hate. He stayed in Bethany during His last hours before His death. This incident took place in the home of Simon the leper. Why did they call him Simon the leper? Did he have leprosy? There was a time when he had this disease, but Jesus had undoubtedly healed him. Now he is able to sit down and have fellowship with the Lord Jesus and others who are having dinner with him at his home. This is a wonderful scene, my friend. The Lord's enemies today do not know Him. They do not know the Lord who healed, who loved, who wept and judged. In fact, some of His enemies of today recently presented a play in a local college in which Jesus and His disciples were characterized as sinful men! Our laws have banned prayer and Bible reading in schools, but they permit the dirtiest, filthiest portrayals of our Lord, and outright blasphemy! Of course, those who produce such things are ignorant; they don't know our Lord. In fact, they are spiritual lepers. If they told the truth, they would have to say of themselves, "Unclean, unclean!"

When you have come to the Lord Jesus and have been cleansed by Him, you can sit down and have fellowship with Him. This is the scene we have in this passage. As they were having dinner, a woman ([John 12:3](#) tells us that it was Mary) came to Jesus with an alabaster box of precious ointment and anointed both His head and His feet with fragrant ointment. John also tells us that it was Judas Iscariot who led the agitation against her, although all the disciples agreed with him.

But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? [[Matt. 26:8](#)].

I wonder how much they really cared about the poor. They remind me of folk in our contemporary society who are always talking about taking care of the poor but are doing nothing about it themselves. In our government there are quite a few legislators who are millionaires and are always talking about a poverty program and other aid for the poor. Have you ever attempted to find out how much they personally have done for the poor? I don't care for that kind of hypocrisy! The evidence of the sincerity of your concern is always in what you yourself are doing. Are you trying to make an impression, or are you really trying to help folk?

For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor [[Matt. 26:9](#)].

That is accurate -- it could have been. It is estimated that the cost of it equalled a year's salary for a rural worker.

When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me [[Matt. 26:10](#)].

As far as Christians are concerned, they should not give to anything nor do anything that does not glorify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Personally, I refuse to participate in any so-called good works in the community unless Christ is glorified in them, unless they are done in His name. And I am amazed at how little they really accomplish. How much do they really give that brings blessing to people? It makes me sick when I hear of the corruption among the politicians in the poverty programs. However, when loving assistance is given in the name of the Lord Jesus, He Himself said that it was a good work.

For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always [[Matt. 26:11](#)].

Those of us who say we trust Christ and want to honor and glorify Him ought to be doing more in His name today.

For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her [[Matt. 26:12-13](#)].

That home of Simon the leper in Bethany was a place of light and friendship for the Lord Jesus. In contrast, Jerusalem was the place of hatred. He did not spend a night in the city of Jerusalem during that final week, but He went out to Bethany and stayed with these folk who loved Him. Those who want Him, who love Him, are the ones He fellowships with in our day. My friend, you can have Him if you want Him.

The beautiful story of the broken alabaster box has filled the world with its fragrance. Our Lord said, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." And we are telling it right now. I hear folk speak about being in the apostolic succession, but I would like to be in the succession of Mary. Mary alone, of all Christ's followers, understood and entered into His death, while the apostles missed the point completely. Although she stood on the fringe of things, she understood, and to let Him know, she anointed Him. Did she waste her ointment? In the Gospel records I read that on the morning of that first day of the week other women came to the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body for burial. I have a question to ask you: Did they put their ointment on the body of Jesus? No, He wasn't in that tomb -- He was risen. Mary alone had the privilege of anointing Him. My friend, you and I need to break our alabaster box of ointment in the name of the Lord Jesus. The world outside doesn't know Him; so we ought to be very careful that what we do brings glory, not to ourselves, but to Him.

Now we turn from that beautiful scene of light to another dark scene.

Plot Of Judas To Sell Jesus (26:14-16)

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him [[Matt. 26:14-16](#)].

This deed of Judas Iscariot is dark and dastardly in contrast to Mary's act of spiritual perception. Dante gave Judas and Brutus the lowest place in The Inferno, and no one since then has said he was wrong. These men did the lowest and basest thing men could do when they betrayed one to whom they should have been loyal.

"He sought opportunity to betray him." You see, the arrest had to take place when Jesus was alone -- that is, when the crowds were gone. Judas waited for such a time.

The Passover And The Last Supper (26:17-30)

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover [[Matt. 26:17-19](#)].

Now the Lord Jesus will go with His own into the Upper Room, and there He will make the announcement that one will betray Him.

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? [[Matt. 26:20-22](#)].

Everyone of those men knew that he had it within his heart to betray Christ. Have you discovered that in your own heart and life? My friend, you and I are just that low. You may say, "Oh, I wouldn't do that!" Are you sure? I would betray Him within the next five minutes if He didn't keep His hand on me -- and you would, too. That ought to keep us close to Him.

And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said [[Matt. 26:23-25](#)].

It is interesting to note that Judas did not call Him Lord as the other disciples did (see [v. 22](#)). At this juncture Judas left the room, according to John's record: "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" ([John 13:30](#)).

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins [[Matt. 26:26-28](#)].

Here we see the Lord instituting the Lord's Supper over the dying ashes of a fading feast, the Passover. The cup circulated seven times during the Passover. It was evidently at the last time that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. During the feast they sang the Hallel Psalms -- [Psalms 111](#) to 118. When you read them for your own spiritual profit, keep in mind that our Lord sang them on that auspicious night. At that last supper, He reared a new monument to Himself. It was not made of marble or bronze but was made of the temporary elements of bread and wine. Both speak of His death until He comes again.

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom [[Matt. 26:29](#)].

The Passover will be reinstituted in the Millennium. The Lord said that He would drink the fruit of the vine again in the Kingdom. This means that apparently the Passover during that time will look back to His death on the Cross. The Passover, which had looked forward for centuries to His coming, will also during the Millennium look back to His coming.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives [[Matt. 26:30](#)].

Prediction Of Peter's Denial (26:31-35)

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad [[Matt. 26:31](#)].

This is a quotation from Zechariah's prophecy (see [Zech. 13:7](#)).

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended [[Matt. 26:32-33](#)].

Peter's answer suggested that he did not trust the other disciples either but that the Lord could sure depend upon him! Peter's problem was that he didn't know himself, and that is the problem many of us have today.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples [[Matt. 26:34-35](#)].

It was early in the evening that Peter said he would not deny our Lord. Yes, he was even ready to die with the Lord. That same night before the cock crowed Peter denied Him, not once, but three times.

Gethsemane (26:36-56)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt [[Matt. 26:36-39](#)].

We need to pay attention to the prayer that our Lord is praying here. "This cup" evidently represents His cross and the contents are the sins of the whole world. More than the death itself and the terrible suffering of crucifixion is something else that we do not seem to realize. It is this: Jesus, holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, was made sin for us. There on the Cross the sin of humanity was put on Him -- not in some forensic or academic manner, but in reality. We cannot even imagine the horror He felt when that sin was placed upon Him. It was a horrendous experience for this One who was holy. Notice that He was not asking to escape the Cross, but He was praying that God's will be done. It is impossible for you and me to enter into the full significance of Gethsemane, but I think it was there that He won the victory of Calvary. Undoubtedly, He was tempted by Satan in Gethsemane as truly as He was in the wilderness. Notice [verse 42](#): "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." He was accepting it. To say that our Lord was trying to avoid going to the Cross is not exactly true. In His humanity He felt a repugnance and the awful horror of having the sins of the world placed upon Himself, and He recoiled for a moment from it. But He committed Himself to the Father. He came to do the Father's will.

Now let's look at the disciples who were in the garden with Him -- Peter, James, and John. After His first prayer, He came back to them and found them sleeping --

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak [[Matt. 26:40-41](#)].

"Watch" -- stay awake, be alert -- "and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." What was the temptation? Who was going to tempt them? Satan was there. Jesus wrestled with an unseen foe -- that is obvious. He overcame the enemy there in Gethsemane. The victory of Calvary was won in Gethsemane.

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done [[Matt. 26:42](#)].

He commits Himself to the Father's will.

And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners [[Matt. 26:43-45](#)].

"Sleep on now and take your rest." Obviously, there is an interval of time between this and the next verse. He didn't tell them to go to sleep and in the next breath tell them to get up. There was time for their nap, and they needed this rest. Notice how our Lord pays attention to the needs of their bodies. After they had slept awhile, He said --

Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people [[Matt. 26:46-47](#)].

The fact that Judas, and also the enemies of Jesus, had witnessed many miracles makes them realize that Jesus has supernatural power and that He might use it. So when they come to arrest Him, they bring a whole crowd of armed men. Possibly the whole guard came to arrest Him.

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast [[Matt. 26:48](#)].

That hot kiss of betrayal is one of the worst things in recorded history.

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him [[Matt. 26:49-50](#)].

A kiss can either be a sign of acceptance or rejection (see [Ps. 2:12](#)). In this instance Judas bestowed a kiss of betrayal upon the Lord Jesus, and it was one of the most despicable acts of man. Some theologians contend that Judas was predestined to betray Jesus and could do nothing else. If this were true, Judas was nothing more than a robot. I believe Judas made up his own mind to betray our Lord and had every opportunity to change his plans. You may say, "Yes, but it was prophesied that he would betray Jesus." I have to agree with you. It was prophesied, and our Lord marked him out as the man. However, after Judas had fulfilled the prophecy, after Jesus was betrayed, Judas could have repented. Jesus gave Judas one final opportunity to repent and accept Him. Even after he gave Jesus that hot kiss of betrayal, Jesus called him, "Friend." Later, when Judas went to the temple and threw down the silver given to him to betray the Lord, he could have changed his mind. As the priests were taking Jesus to Pilate, Judas could have fallen down before Him and said, "Forgive me, Lord, I did not know what I was doing." The Lord would have forgiven him.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear [[Matt. 26:51](#)].

We know who that was; it was Simon Peter. I think that he was trying to prove something. Earlier Peter had boasted that he would die protecting Jesus, but Jesus told him that he would deny Him that very night. Well, Peter got a sword somewhere, and he intended to protect his Lord. But Peter was a fisherman, not a swordsman. He sliced off the man's ear; but he wasn't after ears, he was after his head. He intended to lop off the man's head, but he almost missed him!

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? [[Matt. 26:52-53](#)].

In other words, "I don't need your little sword, Peter. I haven't come to put up a battle against the religious rulers. I have come to die for the sins of the world."

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? [[Matt. 26:54](#)].

You see, our Lord is fulfilling Scripture. Matthew makes this very clear.

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me [[Matt. 26:55](#)].

Previously, His hour had not yet come. But now His hour has come --

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled [[Matt. 26:56](#)].

Jesus had predicted this. All of the disciples leave Him now.

Palace Of The High Priest (26:57-68)

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled [[Matt. 26:57](#)].

We find out later that the father-in-law of Caiaphas was really the instigator of all this. But Jesus must be brought to Caiaphas, the high priest, for the first charge. Because the religious rulers are going to ask Rome for the death penalty, they must determine that night what charge against Jesus they can bring when they go to Pilate in the morning.

But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end [[Matt. 26:58](#)].

Simon Peter followed afar off. It is dangerous for any of us to follow Jesus afar off. We are told in [John 18:15-16](#) that with the aid of John, Peter gained entrance to the courtyard. He waited there to "see the end," and in just a short while he would deny the Lord.

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses [[Matt. 26:59-60](#)].

You see, because the religious rulers had no charge against the Lord Jesus, they had to find false witnesses. And the trouble with getting false witnesses was in finding one that could stand up under investigation. Pilate might be a little inquisitive (which he was) and ask a few annoying questions. Finally, they found two witnesses --

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days [[Matt. 26:61](#)].

According to [John 2:19-22](#), even the disciples misunderstood Jesus when He made the statement: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They didn't understand it until after Jesus' resurrection. Evidently the false witness was a man who had been present at the time Jesus made the statement, but notice that he doesn't quote Him accurately.

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? [[Matt. 26:62](#)].

He tries to get the Lord Jesus to answer so the Sanhedrin will know what kind of an argument to use. The accusation is so absolutely farfetched that our Lord does not answer it.

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God [[Matt. 26:63](#)].

Now the high priest puts Him on oath and asks Him the specific question, "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?"

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven [[Matt. 26:64](#)].

"Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said" -- this is tantamount to saying, "Yes, you have said who I am." Jesus claims for Himself the title "Son of man." Dr. Warfield said that this is the highest title the Lord had. This is a title the prophets used (see Daniel and Ezekiel). It was an epithet of deity. He could have claimed no greater position than to have said He was "the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy [[Matt. 26:65](#)].

"Then the high priest rent his clothes" -- that is, he tears his robes, signifying extreme grief at hearing blasphemy. They think that they have a charge against Jesus now.

What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? [[Matt. 26:66-68](#)].

How they hated the Lord Jesus! This is the natural antagonism of the human heart to His goodness, His righteousness, His holiness, and the fact that He is God. Do you realize, my friend, that if you and I had only our old natures, we would try to knock God off His throne? A few years ago a crowd was saying that God was dead! Do you know why they said that? Because they would like to get Him off His throne. Human nature hates Him.

Here in the Sanhedrin He was slapped, spit upon, beaten with fists, and ridiculed.

"Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" They played a game with Him. They apparently blindfolded Him, then hit Him on the face, and He was to guess who did it. They would never have let Him guess right, of course.

Peter's Denial Of Jesus (26:69-75)

We will look at this in more detail in the other Gospel records.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee [[Matt. 26:69-73](#)].

Galilean pronunciations were a little different from those used in Judea. Peter had a Galilean accent!

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew [[Matt. 26:74](#)].

The poor man did not realize how weak he really was! But our Lord had prayed that his faith would not fail, and it did not.

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly [[Matt. 26:75](#)].

Simon Peter was in the wrong place. For him, it was the place of temptation. No alibi can be offered for his base denial. He was guilty of a heinous act. However, Peter did repent and come back into fellowship with the Lord he loved. In fact, Peter was the one to whom He gave the privilege of preaching the first sermon after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and three thousand people were saved!

Chapter 27

THEME: Events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus; Sanhedrin delivers Jesus to Pilate; repentance of Judas; trial before Pilate; release of Barabbas; crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus; the tomb sealed and a watch set

We have come to the central fact of the gospel message: the crucifixion of Christ. When Paul defined the gospel to the Corinthians, he said, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" ([1Cor. 15:3](#), italics mine). We have now come to the record of that tremendous event.

We will see that Matthew does not give a record of the actual crucifixion. In fact, no Gospel writer does that. They merely tell what went on around the Cross. I know that there are men who depict in graphic terms how the nails were driven into the quivering flesh and how the blood spurted out, but that is not in the Bible. In the inspired record it is as if God placed the mantle of darkness over the last three hours of the life of Jesus on the Cross and said, "This is something you cannot look at. It is beyond human comprehension. The suffering cannot be fathomed." It was a transaction between the Father in heaven and the Son on the Cross. The Cross became an altar upon which the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, was offered.

The simple statement of Matthew is, "And they crucified him."

This chapter begins with the morning after Jesus had been arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, after He had been brought before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, after false witnesses had testified against Him, after He had been beaten and ridiculed, and after Peter had denied Him.

The Sanhedrin Delivers Jesus To Pilate (27:1-10)

When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death [[Matt. 27:1](#)].

They have formulated a charge against Jesus and will take Him now to the supreme court. They think they have a case which will stand up before the Roman court.

And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor [[Matt. 27:2](#)].

Pilate had a palace in Jerusalem, although his headquarters were in Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea. He was in Jerusalem at the Passover season because the city was crowded with Jews who had come to the feast, and generally there were riots on such occasions.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders [[Matt. 27:3](#)].

You see, the Lord Jesus was there when Judas came. As the chief priests and elders were leading Him through that hall to take Him to Pilate, here comes Judas. Why doesn't Judas turn to the Lord Jesus and ask forgiveness? Instead of doing that, he addressed the religious rulers --

Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.
And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that [[Matt. 27:4](#)].

In other words, "You did the job, and it's over with. We have the One we were after. We have paid you off, and we have no need of you any further."

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself [[Matt. 27:5](#)].

This man leaves the temple area, goes out, and hangs himself. He could have turned to the Lord Jesus and would have been forgiven!

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood [[Matt. 27:6](#)].

How pious they are! They can't put it in the temple treasury because it is blood money.

And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day [[Matt. 27:7-8](#)].

This was a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy --

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me
[[Matt. 27:9-10](#)].

You will find this prophecy alluded to in [Jeremiah 18:1-4](#) and evidently quoted from [Zechariah 11:12-13](#). It is credited to Jeremiah simply because in Jesus' day Jeremiah was the first of the books of the prophets, and that section was identified by the name of the first book.

The significant thing is that Jesus was present when Judas returned with his thirty pieces of silver. In fact, Jesus was on His way to die -- even for Judas. Our Lord had given him an opportunity to come back to Him there in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He had said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And even at this eleventh hour, Judas could have turned to the Lord Jesus and would have been forgiven.

Pilate Questions Jesus (27:11-32)

And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest [[Matt. 27:11](#)].

You see, the religious rulers wanted to get rid of Jesus because of what they considered blasphemy. You remember that when the high priest put Him on oath and asked Him if He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said that He was. And further He said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" ([Matt. 26:64](#)). To the religious rulers that was blasphemy, and they would have stoned Him on that charge, but Rome did not allow the Jews to carry out the death penalty. So they had to deliver Jesus to Pilate with a charge that would stick in a Roman court. Treason would be one that would stick, and so Jesus was charged with claiming to be the King of the Jews.

The answer of Jesus to the charge was, "Thou sayest" -- or, "It is as you say."

And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing [[Matt. 27:12](#)].

They made certain false charges against Him, and our Lord didn't bother to answer them.

Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly [[Matt. 27:13-14](#)].

He was the Lamb of God, you see, who before the shearers was dumb (see [Isa. 53:7](#)).

Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas [[Matt. 27:15-16](#)].

Matthew does not give us the byplay that took place. All the other Gospel writers add a great deal to this account, but Matthew simply states the bare facts.

Obviously, Pilate felt that the religious rulers had no basis for requesting the death penalty. Jesus had not incited rebellion against Rome. Others had, but Jesus had not. Pilate had a problem on his hands. He wanted to please the religious leaders in order to maintain peace in Jerusalem, but he felt that he could not arbitrarily sentence the Lord Jesus to death. So he hit upon a solution to the problem. Since it was his habit to release a Jewish prisoner during the Passover celebration, he would offer the crowd a choice: Jesus; or a very notorious prisoner called Barabbas, who was guilty of murder, robbery, treason -- the whole bit.

Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? [[Matt. 27:17](#)].

Pilate thought that the crowd would certainly ask that Jesus be released -- the contrast between Him and Barabbas was so evident.

For he knew that for envy they had delivered him [[Matt. 27:18](#)].

Pilate was a clever politician. He could see what was taking place, and he was sure that the crowd would ask for Barabbas to be crucified and Jesus to be released. This would give him a happy "out" to this situation.

When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him [[Matt. 27:19](#)].

Pilate's wife was as superstitious as could be. Perhaps she was tied up in a mystery religion, and this sort of thing could have been satanic. I do not believe that this warning came from God. If she had been a just woman, she would have investigated Jesus and found out more about Him. She did not, however. She was simply superstitious and asked her husband to have nothing to do with Him.

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus [[Matt. 27:20](#)].

You see, the religious rulers were clever politicians themselves. They circulated among the crowd saying, "Ask that Barabbas be delivered and Jesus be destroyed."

The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas [[Matt. 27:21](#)].

Pilate was taken aback. He had not known how low religion would stoop.

Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified [[Matt. 27:22](#)].

Imagine a Roman judge asking a crowd what he should do with a prisoner! Pilate was the judge, and he should make the decision. The Gospel of John tells us that Pilate repeatedly called Jesus inside the judgment hall and questioned Him privately. His thought seemed to be, "Jesus, if You will cooperate with me, I can get You out of this, and it will get me off this hot seat I'm on!" But the Lord Jesus would not defend Himself. When we analyze

this mock trial, we come to the conclusion that Pilate was the one on trial and, actually, that Jesus was the Judge.

Pilate had to make a decision relative to Him; so he asked the crowd, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" The answer came back to him -- it was flung in his face -- "Let him be crucified!"

And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified [[Matt. 27:23](#)].

A mob never has a reason.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it [[Matt. 27:24](#)].

Pilate called for a basin of water and washed his hands, declaring that he would have nothing to do with the execution of Jesus. But it was not that easy. He had to make a decision -- every man does. It was John Newton who wrote:

"What think ye of Christ?" is the test, To try both your state and your scheme; You cannot be right in the rest, Unless you think rightly of Him.

Although Pilate washed his hands, the bitter irony of it is that in the oldest creed of the church stand these words: ". . . crucified under Pontius Pilate." The blood of Jesus was on his hands no matter how much he washed them.

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children [[Matt. 27:25](#)].

Unfortunately, that has been the case, and it can be so demonstrated.

Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified [[Matt. 27:26](#)].

Pilate was willing to stoop this low himself. He had to make a decision, and his decision, of course, was one of rejection.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers [[Matt. 27:27](#)].

The soldiers were free to do with Him as they pleased. He became a plaything for this brutal, cruel crowd.

And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! [[Matt. 27:28-29](#)].

It is frightful what they did to Him --

And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head [[Matt. 27:30](#)].

The soldiers took this opportunity to have their fun with Him before He was crucified. Since He was going to die anyway, they could mutilate Him and do anything they wished with Him. They played a cruel Roman game known as "hot-hand" with their prisoners. All the soldiers would show the prisoner their fists. Then they would blindfold the prisoner, and all but one would hit him as hard as they could. Then they would remove the blindfold, and if the prisoner was still conscious, he was to guess which soldier did not hit him. Obviously, the prisoner could never guess the right one. They would continue this until they had beaten the prisoner to a pulp. I believe that the Lord Jesus was so mutilated that you would not have recognized Him. "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" ([Isa. 52:14](#)).

And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross [[Matt. 27:31-32](#)].

Jesus was subjected to abject humiliation and untold suffering. We are given the impression here that He was too weak to carry His cross because of the ordeal to which the soldiers had subjected Him.

The Crucifixion (27:33-50)

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull [[Matt. 27:33](#)].

That place can be identified, I believe, as Gordon's Calvary (named for General Gordon who selected it as the probable site of Golgotha). I have looked around that area. After all these years and the things that have happened to the city Jerusalem, it is difficult to make a judgment, but certainly the topography of Gordon's choice is close to the biblical description of Golgotha. It is a place that resembles a skull.

They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink [[Matt. 27:34](#)].

This is a fulfillment of [Psalm 69:21](#): "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots [[Matt. 27:35](#)].

The prophecy is from [Psalm 22](#), which presents a graphic picture of death by crucifixion: "They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture" ([Ps. 22:18](#)).

And sitting down they watched him there [[Matt. 27:36](#)].

In my opinion it is here that we see humanity which has reached its lowest depth. You don't need to go to skid row or to a prison to see man at his lowest, you can see him here - "sitting down they watched him there." I believe that in this crowd was Saul of Tarsus. Later on when he wrote to Timothy, he called himself the chief of sinners (see [1Tim. 1:15](#)), and I believe he called himself that because he was the chief of sinners.

And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross [[Matt. 27:37-40](#)].

"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Notice that they raise the doubt - "If thou be the Son of God . . ." Little did they know that since He is the Son of God, He will not come down from the Cross. He doesn't have to prove anything at this point. He is now dying for the sins of the world.

Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said [[Matt. 27:41](#)].

You would think that after this pack of bloodhounds had succeeded in getting Him on the Cross, they would go home and let Him die in peace, but they didn't. They stayed there taunting Him while there was still life in His body.

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him [[Matt. 27:42](#)].

That is a true statement -- "He saved others; himself he cannot save." If He were to save you and me, He would have had to die on that cross. If He had come down from the Cross, you and I would have to be executed for our sins. We deserve it; we are hell-doomed sinners. Christ was taking our place there. As surely as He took the place of Barabbas, He took our place.

"Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Would they have believed Him? I don't think so.

He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God [[Matt. 27:43](#)].

You can see that the crowd understood that Jesus claimed deity.

The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth [[Matt. 27:44](#)].

Matthew calls our attention to the thieves who were crucified with Him and the fact that they joined with the religious rulers in mocking Him. He does not call our attention to the fact that one of the thieves finally turned to Jesus. The Kingdom presented in Matthew

will be on this earth, and the thief who repented went with Christ to paradise that very day.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour [[Matt. 27:45](#)].

Our Lord was put on the Cross at the third hour, which would be nine o'clock in the morning. By twelve noon, man had done all he could to the Son of God. Then at the noon hour, darkness settled down, and that cross became an altar on which the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world was offered.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [[Matt. 27:46](#)].

We find the answer to that question in [Psalm 22](#). It opens with these words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" Then we read the answer in [verse 3](#): "But thou art holy . . ." ([Ps. 22:1, 3](#), italics mine). When my sin is put upon Jesus, God has to withdraw. Our Savior had to be executed if He were going to take my sin and yours.

Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink [[Matt. 27:47-48](#)].

Why? To fulfill prophecy -- "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" ([Ps. 69:21](#)).

The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost [[Matt. 27:49-50](#)].

Notice how He died: He "yielded up the ghost" -- that is, He dismissed His spirit. As a pastor I have often heard the death rattle, the gasp for that last breath which we all want so badly. Our Lord didn't go that way. He dismissed His spirit. He went willingly.

Incidents Connected With His Death (27:51-56)

At the death of Christ several very notable things took place. One was an earthquake. Another was that the veil in the temple, the curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, was torn in two --

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent [[Matt. 27:51](#)].

Notice that the veil was torn, not from the bottom to the top but from top to bottom. It was rent by God, not by man. The veil symbolizes the body of Jesus. When His body was rent upon the Cross -- when He had paid the penalty for your sin and my sin in His own

body -- then the way was opened into the presence of God. Therefore, you and I don't have to have a priest or a preacher go into the presence of God for us; we can go directly to the throne of God through Christ. Let's emphasize that the only way to the Father is through His Son. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" ([1Tim. 2:5](#)).

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many [[Matt. 27:52-53](#)].

This is an event that is mentioned only by Matthew. We wish more had been told. I can only say that I believe it happened just the way Matthew tells it and that those who arose were part of that great company who went to heaven when Christ led captivity captive at His ascension (see [Eph. 4:8-10](#)). The earthquake mentioned in [verse 51](#) was an intelligent quake, not haphazard, because the graves were opened by it, and "many bodies of the saints which slept arose" -- just certain ones.

"And [they] appeared unto many." There were many witnesses who saw these certain folk because, according to Matthew, they "went into the holy city and appeared unto many." There is a very excellent treatment of this, and the other miracles which occurred at this time, in a little booklet entitled The Six Miracles of Calvary, written by Bishop Nicholson. If you are interested in pursuing this study, I recommend it to you. It is a rich little book.

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God [[Matt. 27:54](#)].

In Mark's account it says this: "And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God" ([Mark 15:39](#)). Apparently, that Roman centurion, who was in charge of the actual crucifixion, stood beneath Christ's cross. As he witnessed some of the miraculous events during this time and as he saw the Lord Jesus dismiss His spirit, the fact was confirmed to him that this was the Son of God. I believe that the centurion became a saved man. He probably did not know a great deal; he had never read Strong's theology or Hodges' theology, nor Augustine's City of God, nor any of my books, but he knew enough to take his place beneath the Cross of Christ. And that is all that God asks of any sinner.

And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children [[Matt. 27:55-56](#)].

Jesus Buried In Joseph's Tomb (27:57-61)

When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple [[Matt. 27:57](#)].

We did not know that he was a disciple until this event. It is interesting to see that the very thing which caused the apostles to scatter seems to have drawn into the open others who, up to this time, would have been called secret disciples. Joseph of the town of Arimathaea stepped out and declared his faith.

He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered [[Matt. 27:58](#)].

Joseph went to Pilate on the basis that he was a disciple of Jesus.

And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth [[Matt. 27:59](#)].

John tells us that Nicodemus worked with Joseph in preparing the body of Jesus for burial -- "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" ([John 19:39-40](#)). These two men, who apparently had been in the background, now came out in the open as the disciples of Jesus. It is interesting to note that only loving hands touched the body of Jesus after His death.

And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre [[Matt. 27:60-61](#)].

Note this one tender incident in connection with the death of Jesus. Several women were faithful and stayed at the cross. They were loyal when the apostles had fled.

Near the hill, which we designate as Gordon's Calvary, is a tomb which is pointed out as the tomb in which Jesus was buried. It is called the Garden Tomb. We have no way of knowing if this was the tomb of Jesus; frankly, I have my doubts. There are many sepulchres in that area, and it could have been any one of them. I feel sure that His tomb is in that area, and the Garden Tomb is as good a choice as any of them. But to determine the exact location of Golgotha and of the tomb and to make them sacred shrines is not Christ's intention. I saw a woman go into the tomb and on hands and knees kiss the floor where the bodies were placed! That has no value. What our Lord wants us to do is to believe the gospel -- that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again -- and to take that good news to the whole world.

The Sepulchre Is Sealed And The Watch Set (27:62-66)

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say

unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch [[Matt. 27:62-66](#)]

The zeal of the enemy actually gives a confirmation of Jesus' resurrection! If they had gone off and left that tomb as it was, their later explanation for the tomb's being empty might be plausible. But, my friend, when you've got a tomb that is sealed and a Roman guard around it watching it, their claim that the apostles stole away the body of Jesus sounds pretty silly. The enemies of Jesus went to a lot of trouble to make the sepulchre sure, and that fact furnishes a marvelous confirmation of His resurrection.

Another interesting point is that when our Lord had told His disciples that He would rise again the third day, they had told a great many people, and the religious rulers got word of it. As soon as they could get another audience with Pilate, they said, "Look, Jesus made the statement that He would rise again the third day, and we want to make sure His body stays in that tomb." Of course, they did not believe He would be resurrected, but neither did the apostles believe that He would come out of that tomb alive.

Chapter 28

THEME: The resurrection of Jesus; the giving of the Great Commission

The arch of the gospel rests upon two great pillars: (1) the death of Christ, and (2) the resurrection of Christ. Listen to the apostle Paul as he defines the gospel: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" ([1Cor. 15:3-4](#)).

In the previous chapter we have seen the death and burial of the Lord Jesus, and in this chapter we will see His resurrection. Both are essential to my salvation and yours. "Who [Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)). He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

The unique fact of the gospel is the Resurrection. All other religions record the death of their leader. Only the Christian faith records the Resurrection of its Founder. All other religious leaders are dead. Only Jesus is alive. This is important and imperative to know.

No Gospel writer gives the complete details which concern the Resurrection. Each records that aspect of the Resurrection which contributes to the furtherance of the purpose which the Spirit had in mind. Therefore the four Gospels present a composite picture. No writer is seeing to give the entire and complete record but only that which serves his purpose. All the Gospel accounts need to be put together to get the total picture, and no conflict or contradiction will appear among them.

Regarding the order of events connected with the resurrection of Christ, I would like to share with you a very fine note found in The Scofield Reference Bible on page 1043:

The order of events, combining the four narratives, is as follows: Three women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, start for the sepulchre, followed by other women bearing spices. The three find the stone rolled away, and Mary Magdalene goes to tell the disciples ([Lk. 23:55](#) through [Luke 24:9](#); [John 20:1, 2](#)). Mary, the mother of James and Joses, draws nearer the tomb and sees the angel of the Lord ([Mt. 28:2](#)). She goes back to meet the other women following with the spices. Meanwhile Peter and John, warned by Mary Magdalene, arrive, look in, and go away ([John 20:3-10](#)). Mary Magdalene returns weeping, sees the two angels and then Jesus ([John 20:11-18](#)), and goes as He bade her to tell the disciples. Mary (mother of James and Joses), meanwhile, has met the women with the spices and, returning with them, they see the two angels ([Lk. 24:4, 5](#); [Mk. 16:5](#)). They also receive the angelic message, and, going to seek the disciples, are met by Jesus ([Mt. 28:8-10](#)).

The order of our Lord's appearances would seem to be: On the day of His resurrection: (1) To Mary Magdalene ([John 20:14-18](#)). (2) To the women returning from the tomb with the angelic message ([Mt. 28:8-10](#)). (3) To Peter, probably in the afternoon ([Lk. 24:34](#); [1Cor. 15:5](#)). (4) To the Emmaus disciples toward evening ([Lk. 24:13-31](#)). (5) To the apostles, except Thomas ([Lk. 24:36-43](#); [John 20:19-24](#)). Eight days afterward: (1) To the apostles, Thomas being present ([John 20:24-29](#)). In Galilee: (1) To the seven by the Lake of Tiberias ([John 21:1-23](#)). (2) On a mountain, to the apostles and five hundred brethren ([1Cor. 15:6](#)). At Jerusalem and Bethany again: (1) To James ([1Cor. 15:7](#)). (2) To the eleven ([Mt. 28:16-20](#); [Mk. 16:14-20](#); [Lk. 24:33-53](#); [Acts 1:3-12](#)). To Paul: (1) Near Damascus ([Acts 9:3-6](#); [1Cor. 15:8](#)). (2) In the temple ([Acts 22:17-21](#); [Acts 23:11](#)). To Stephen, outside Jerusalem ([Acts 7:55](#)). To John on Patmos ([Rev. 1:10-19](#)).

Matthew presents Jesus as the King. The features of the resurrection story which contain the element of the spectacular and sensational are given. There is a fanfare of trumpets in the account given in Matthew. He was born a King. He lived as a King. He died a King, and He rose from the dead a King. Matthew tells of the earthquake, of the angel's descent, of the stone rolled away, of the frightened guards, and of the effort by the religious rulers to cover up the fact of the empty tomb.

Compare Luke's Gospel with Matthew's account. There is quietness and a subdued tone which characterizes Luke's purpose. The women come in the stillness of the early morning, and the stone is already rolled away. The Lord Jesus appears to two unknown disciples on an obscure road leading to Emmaus and then to the disciples in a secret room of a house of unknown address. Luke is recording the human story while Matthew is presenting Him in His kingly office. Both records are accurate, as are the records in the other two Gospels, but they are presented from four different viewpoints.

Approach Of The Two Marys To The Tomb (28:1-7)

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre [[Matt. 28:1](#)].

The other Gospel records tell us that they were bringing sweet spices to anoint the body of Jesus. It is difficult to identify the "other Mary." Tradition states that she was the mother of James and Joses.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it [[Matt. 28:2](#)].

Why was it necessary to roll back the stone? To let Jesus out? No, He was gone when the stone was rolled back. The tomb was not opened to let Him out but to let them in.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow [[Matt 28:3](#)].

It is interesting to note the description of the angel because this is very unusual in Scripture (see [Dan. 10:6](#); [Rev. 10:1](#) for other descriptions).

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men [[Matt. 28:4](#)].

I can imagine that the guards were very happy to leave after this episode! They were helpless in the presence of the angel.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified [[Matt. 28:5](#)].

"Fear not" -- when the supernatural touches the natural, it is always with a word to allay fear.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay [[Matt. 28:6](#)].

This is the divine announcement of the Resurrection. Jesus had left the tomb before the stone had been rolled away. Later He would enter a room with a locked door. The glorified body of Jesus was radically different from the body with which He was born.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you [[Matt. 28:7](#)].

The angelic announcement ceased at this point. From here on the message would be told by human lips -- "Come, see. . . go quickly, and tell." But before any individual attempts to witness, he must first have an unshakable conviction of the truth of the Resurrection. He must have it settled in his own mind that Christ died for his sins and was buried -- "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" -- and that Christ rose again -- "He is not here: for he is risen." Then with these convictions, he can "go quickly, and tell." My friend, you and I are to go and we are to tell.

Appearance Of Jesus To The Two Marys (28:8-10)

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word [[Matt. 28:8](#)].

Note the mingled feelings of the women -- fear and great joy.

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him [[Matt. 28:9](#)].

This seems to contradict the encounter of Mary Magdalene with her resurrected Lord. In [John 20:17](#) we find this: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." The explanation is that between these two encounters Jesus had ascended to His Father and had presented His precious blood in heaven's Holy of Holies.

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me [[Matt. 28:10](#)].

He made an appointment to see them in Galilee.

Alibi Of The Keepers (28:11-15)

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done [[Matt. 28:11](#)].

These soldiers who were on guard duty went into the city and reported to the chief priests. They didn't know when Jesus left the tomb. All they knew was that after the stone was rolled away, they took a look inside the tomb, and the body wasn't there! The entire episode had nearly frightened them to death. They could have been executed for allowing the body of Jesus to disappear under their very eyes.

And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept [[Matt. 28:12-13](#)].

This is not a very plausible explanation! Imagine a soldier, especially a Roman soldier, assigned guard duty in a certain place and given strict orders to stand guard over a certain thing and to prohibit all trespassing. Suppose someone did come and take away the thing he was assigned to guard. And suppose that his explanation to his commanding officer was, "I went to sleep." What do you think would happen to him?

And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you [[Matt. 28:14](#)].

In others words, "Don't worry if this reaches the ears of the governor. We won't let him put you before a firing squad."

So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day [[Matt. 28:15](#)].

A bribe aided in persuading them to offer this feeble excuse. This was the first century alibi to explain away the resurrection of Christ. Unbelief has now had nineteen centuries to think it over, and there are other alibis. However, none yet have been offered that can explain away the documentary evidence.

The Great Commission (28:16-20)

In our contemporary society we have two opposing viewpoints regarding this so-called Great Commission. Frankly, I think both of them are extreme. Our Lord's commission to His disciples as recorded by Matthew is a source of controversy. One extreme group feels that the Great Commission contains the only command for the church. That is it, and they hang on to it. The other extreme group feels that it has no meaning for our day and that it should be excluded from the church program. It seems to me that both of these groups are in error.

We have endeavored to show that Matthew has direct application for us, and certainly the Great Commission has an application for us in our day. This does not mean that it will not find a final and full meaning in the future -- I think it will. But, as it is obvious that Matthew did not give the total record of the Resurrection, neither did he give us the total commission. I feel that everything our Lord said on any subject should be put together and given as a composite in order to give a full-orbed command for the present day as well as for the future. The commission in Matthew should be considered with the commission recorded in the other gospel records and especially with [Acts 1:8](#): "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We are to be His witnesses, and we are to be endued with power from on high.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted [[Matt. 28:16-17](#)].

Some worshiped and some doubted -- that is how it has been for over nineteen hundred years! And, my friend, you are in one category or the other.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth [[Matt. 28:18](#)].

He was speaking as the King.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [[Matt. 28:19](#)].

This, I am confident, will have a real application during the Great Tribulation period and even during the Millennium. But, my friend, it has an application for us today, also.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." Baptism by water in the name of the Trinity has been practiced by the church from its beginning. Even Paul, who was not sent to baptize (see [1Cor. 1:14-17](#)), practiced this rite of the early church. "The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" is evidence for the Trinity of the Godhead.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen [[Matt. 28:20](#)].

Notice that teaching is part of the work of the church (see [Eph. 4:11](#)). The teachings of Jesus are found not only in the Gospels but in the Epistles (see [1Thess. 4:2](#)).

"Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." The word world is the Greek *aion*, meaning age. Our Lord promises to be with us right on through to the very end of the age. In His power the Great Commission can be carried out.

We have looked at the Great Commission, now let's consider the great omission. Do you see what Matthew has omitted from his record? There is no ascension of Christ here. Why? The obvious reason is that the Kingdom will be here upon this earth, and Matthew leaves the King here on earth because this is where the King is to be. [Luke 24:49-53](#) and [Acts 1:6-11](#) record the ascension of Christ. At the time of the rapture of the church, the Lord Jesus will take His own out of the world to be with Himself, and the Ascension is essential for that event.

However, Matthew is the Gospel of the King. Jesus was born a King. He lived as a King. He died as a King. He rose again as a King. And, my friend, He will be coming again to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords! I hope you will bow to Him today.

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